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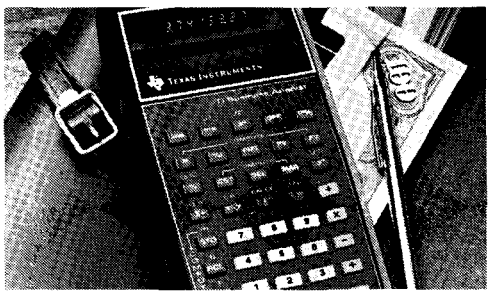

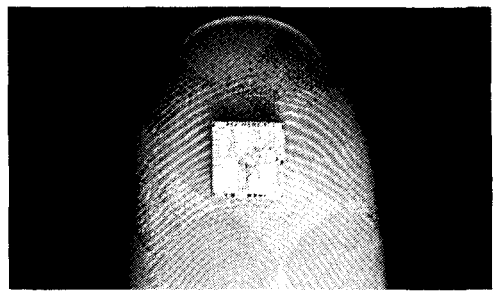

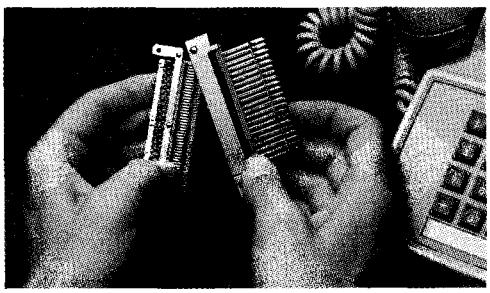

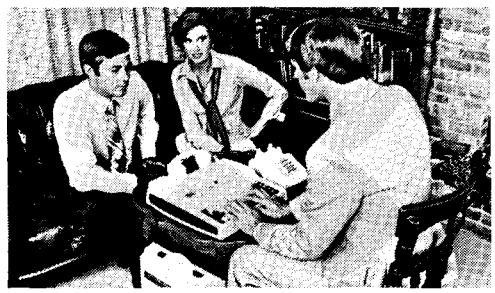

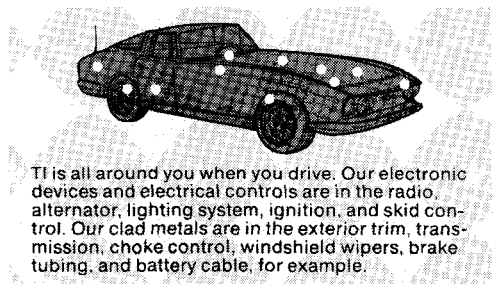

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CONTENTS

An American Celebration:
The Phi Beta Kappa Bicentennial 9

The Despairing Optimist
René Dubos 10

State of the Lingo
Aristides 20

At Home in America
Peter Gay 31

English Visitors
Henry Fairlie 43

Many Tocquevilles
Robert Nisbet 59

Letters from George Santayana 76

F. O. Matthiessen
Kenneth S. Lynn 86

The Other Gibbon
Hugh Trevor-Roper 94

The Most Disgusting of the Pronouns
John Clive 104

Rome: A Meditation on Keats
Alfred Kazin 109

POETRY

Brain
John Stone 18

Dichtung und Wahrheit
Anthony Hecht 56

The Third Man in the Boat
Peter Porter 85

From a Nerja Hotel Window
Diana Der Hovanessian 93

My Friend Told Me
Richard Frost 103

BOOKS

The Group and the Salon
Leon Edel 116

Reviews
George Kateb, Carolyn G. Heilbrun, Aram A. Yengoyan, John Higham 124

THE READER REPLIES 142

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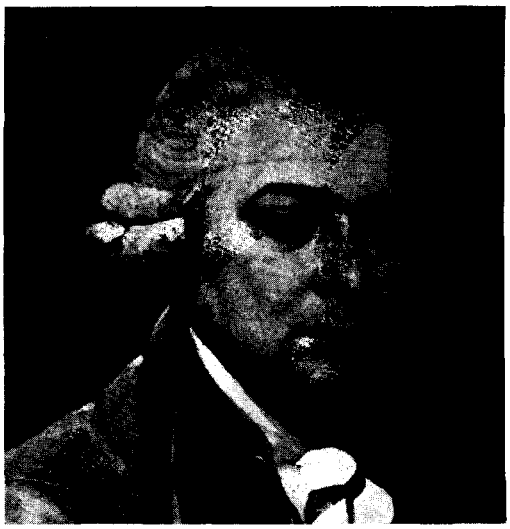

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An American Celebration

The Phi Beta Kappa Bicentennial

THE YEAR 1976 marks the two hundredth anniversary of the founding of Phi Beta Kappa at William and Mary College in Williamsburg, Virginia. The debt of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR to Phi Beta Kappa is not merely great; it is more accurately described as complete. The idea for the journal, founded at the height of the Depression in 1932, was conceived under Phi Beta Kappa's roof, and the cost of producing it financed out of Phi Beta Kappa's coffers. A sponsoring organization more generous to a journal than Phi Beta Kappa has been to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR is impossible to imagine.

Important as this is, even more important is that the two institutions, the scholarly society and the intellectual journal, have from the beginning shared a common spirit. It is a spirit informed by a belief in the importance of intellectual enterprise, in critical discussion, in merit earned through the effort of mental discipline. THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR remains one of the major public activities of Phi Beta Kappa; at its best, the journal serves the society by serving the world of intellect, in a way similar to David Hume's view of the function of his own essay-writing: "I cannot but consider myself as a kind of resident or ambassador from the dominions of learning to those of conversation, and shall think it my constant duty to promote a good correspondence betwixt these two states, which have so great a dependence on each other."

In celebration of the Phi Beta Kappa bicentennial, we are pleased to present this special issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, entitled "An American Celebration." The celebration, as befits Phi Beta Kappa, is not one of self-congratulation but of what we hope is an issue of the journal marked by intellectual distinction in the tradition for which Phi Beta Kappa itself has always stood.

THE EDITORS

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The Despairing Optimist

RENÉ DUBOS

Scientific medicine, based on laboratory research, is certainly one of the major achievements of Western civilization. It has provided reliable and inexpensive methods for the prevention and cure of many diseases. It has developed ways to attenuate the suffering caused by the diseases it cannot control, and means to help patients carry on a fairly normal life even in the presence of continued physical handicaps. Yet, despite its phenomenal successes, scientific medicine has lost much of its prestige in our society; it is being mocked for its ineffectiveness against disease, and castigated for its reckless disregard for human values. Since I have devoted most of my professional life to medical research, I feel deeply involved, even though vicariously, in the present heated discussions about the so-called crisis in modern medicine.

The universal outcry against the cost of medical care, the proliferation of malpractice suits, the widespread feeling that scientific physicians often behave as if they were more interested in the study of disease than in the welfare of their patients are among the most publicized aspects of hostility toward the medical establishment. Criticisms of a more fundamental nature can be read in several recent books, such as Rick J. Carlson's *The End of Medicine* and Ivan Illich's *Medical Nemesis*, which have popularized the thesis that scientific medicine is far less useful than commonly believed, and is indeed often dangerous because it is itself the cause of a great variety of iatrogenic diseases. Another disconcerting development of our times is the increasing appeal of ways of healing which have not emerged from orthodox medical sciences. Many people seem to believe that the medicine of the future will be based on Oriental, Indian, and other esoteric cultures, or on the various practices of meditation, mind control, and faith healing, supplemented by the endless diversity of food fads and of attempts to reestablish living patterns assumed to be in accordance with nature. All these "other" ways of healing deserve attention, if only because they have found their most enthusiastic following among educated and prosperous people who have ready access to the most modern types of medical care—but have found them wanting.

There are good reasons for criticizing modern medicine and for worrying about its failures. In fact, the most intense soul-searching about present medical policies, as well as the most radical suggestions for reforming them, have come not from the counter-cultures, but from the medical professions themselves. I have written on this subject in several articles and books published during the past two decades, including *Mirage of Health* (1959), *Man Adapting* (1965), *Man, Medicine and Environment* (1968).

While it is true that the strategies of scientific medicine are in need of reappraisal, it is also a fact that the kinds of criticism currently leveled against medical practice have many historical precedents. Each age has admired the wisdom and human qualities of the physicians of the preceding generation, but has lamented the pretentiousness and cupidity of its own physicians. Despite appearances, I suspect that the attitude of our contemporaries toward modern medicine does not really imply a rejection of the scientific ap-

RENÉ DUBOS is professor emeritus at the Rockefeller University. His newest book, just published, is *The Professor, the Institute, and DNA*.

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proach, but only disappointment with its failure to fulfill completely the ever-growing expectations it has generated. It is an attitude about medicine similar to the one expressed by Anatole France through his mouthpiece Jérome Coignard: "I despise science, my son, for having loved it too much, like those disenchanted voluptuaries who reproach women for not having given them all the satisfactions they had expected from love." Until recently, there was limitless faith in the benefits medicine would derive from science; disenchantment is now emerging from the awareness of its limitations.

Every medical advance has been so publicized and glamorized that expectations have been raised year by year; medicine has been credited with powers it does not possess. As is well known, a very large percentage of pathological conditions have their origin in social or environmental defects as well as in emotional disturbances, which most physicians regard as outside the domain of scientific medicine. In the course of discussions held during 1975 in the boardroom of the Rockefeller Foundation, influential medical scientists and administrators repeatedly stated their belief that medicine should disentangle "the organic elements of disease from the psychosocial elements" and "deal with the former only." According to them, medicine should not attempt to provide solutions for the problems of social or emotional pathology.

Most people, however, have a much more exalted view of medicine than is implied in the opinion that its responsibility should be limited to the purely organic aspects of disease. They believe that a physician worth his salt should be more than a body patcher—to use Martin Luther's expression—and should be capable of dealing with all problems that affect the quality of life, were it only by formulating advice based on his broad knowledge of the human organism. There is no doubt in fact that medicine has often dealt effectively with social pathology, for example when it brought about the control of hookworm disease by advocating simple social changes. It is certain also that medicine has a long history of experience with emotional pathology. As I shall now illustrate, physicians have always depended not only on their scientific knowledge for their therapeutic successes, but also on their ability to instill in their patients an attitude of confidence and peace of mind.

Throughout history, all people, regardless of their economic and cultural development, have used two kinds of medicine simultaneously—one focused on the treatment of the body by nutritional regimens, by surgical interventions, and by the administration of drugs; the other based on practices which aim at healing the patient by influencing his mind. Just as was the case in primitive societies and ancient civilizations, the physicians of Western countries have always tacitly accepted that everything that happens in the psyche affects the body, and vice versa. The phrase "psychosomatic medicine" is scientific jargon for what has long been common sense. "The passions influence the body and some of them in a very eminent degree; they are grief, joy, fear, love, hatred and anger," wrote Dr. J. Elliot in 1786; and he was bold enough to suggest that "these passions therefore might be employed by physicians as cordials, which they are of the highest kind."

Medicine had very little to offer in the way of effective therapy until a few decades ago. The cures of organic diseases that ancient physicians managed to bring about were due less to the method of treatment they used than to the patient's faith in its effectiveness. Although this fact was recognized by most physicians interested in the operations of the unconscious during the second half of the nineteenth century, it was most emphatically stated by William Osler (1849-1919), a Canadian who became the first professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore and moved from there in 1910 to become Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University.

Osler was an immensely learned and successful physician and was indeed considered the greatest clinician of his time, yet he was convinced that most of the drugs and methods of treatment available to the medicine of his day were essentially useless, or even outright dangerous. He traced much of his own success as a healer to psychological attributes that had nothing to do with his scientific knowledge. He believed, in fact, that all phy-

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sicians exert certain therapeutic effects by an influence on their patients very similar to that exerted by the Greek members of the Aesculapian cult in Greece and by healers in other forms of ancient temple medicine. This conviction influenced much of his clinical and other professional activities.

During the month of January 1901, the *New York Sun* published a series of articles on the major achievements of the century that had just ended. The article on "The Progress of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century" was written by Osler, who was at that time at the Johns Hopkins Medical School. While he took his usual stance as a therapeutic nihilist, he also made the surprising remark that a "noteworthy feature in modern treatment has been a return to psychical methods of cure, in which *faith in something is suggested* to the patient . . . . Faith in the gods or in the saints cures one, faith in little pills another, hypnotic suggestion a third, faith in a common doctor, a fourth" [Osler's italics]. He went on to state, "Faith in us, faith in our drugs and methods is the great stock-in-trade of the profession." As was his bent, he supported his theme with historical quotations. For example, he cited as a "great truth" Galen's famous statement, "He cures most successfully in whom the people have the greatest confidence."

Osler was so impressed by the importance of faith healing that he discussed the topic at length in his great textbook *The Principles and Practice of Medicine* and came back to it in several essays and lectures. Probably under his influence, the *British Medical Journal* for June 18, 1910, published several articles by important English physicians who expressed their views about faith healing, the last of which was Osler's article, "The Faith That Heals." As can be seen from the following excerpts, he still believed that much of his own success as a clinician was due to such faith: ". . . our results at the Johns Hopkins Hospital were most gratifying. Faith in *St. Johns Hopkins,* as we used to call him, an atmosphere of optimism, and cheerful nurses, worked just the same sort of cures as did Aesculapius at Epidaurus" [Osler's italics].

Osler's students, as well as his colleagues and his biographer, the famous neurosurgeon Harvey Cushing, were aware of his gifts as a faith healer. Of the first three women accepted at the Johns Hopkins Medical School, one abandoned the course during her third year because she had become a Christian Scientist. According to her own account, her decision to drop out was indirectly due to Osler ". . . who, she was sure, must be a Christian Scientist at heart, for his methods of treatment were indistinguishable from those of Mrs. Eddy."

It is certain that when Osler used expressions such as "faith healing" and "psychical methods of cure," he had in mind psychological influences capable of setting in motion the automatic processes of recovery that exist in all living organisms, namely the mechanisms of *Naturae vis Medicatrix*

While self-healing is effective in only a limited range of pathological conditions, its power is very great indeed when circumstances are right—a fact that explains one of the paradoxes of medical history. As far back as the ancient civilizations of China, Egypt, and Greece, there have been famous physicians reputed for their ability to treat disease; similarly, all primitive societies have had and continue to have successful medicine men. Yet, as already mentioned, there were very few effective therapeutic procedures until a few decades ago.

Granted that the accounts of miraculous cures are commonly distorted and exaggerated, they have a basis of truth in the fact that patients can be helped by attitudes and procedures that do not depend on the use of effective drugs or other therapeutic procedures and that do not require any understanding of disease causation on the part of the healer. It is not only Christ and his Apostles who cured the sick without the instruments of medicine. The votives in the Greek Aesculapians and in the shrines of ancient religions have their contemporary counterparts in Notre Dame de Lourdes, Sainte Anne de Beaupré, and all the holy sites and places of worship where faith healing is practiced—as well as in a variety of religious movements such as Christian Science or the medical activities of the Emmanuel Church in Boston. In fact, religious faith is not needed for medical "miracles"; almost any faith will do, be it faith in the healing power of a particular person or in the efficacy of a

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given substance or procedure. Physiologically inert substances—placebos—can produce effects similar to those of powerful drugs if patients have faith in their activity.

Until recently, even in the most sophisticated societies, physicians have used the psychological equivalents of the costumes, incantations, and gestures that shamans use to mollify certain physical and mental disorders. The blue frock coats of nineteenth-century European physicians, their gold-headed canes and dignified carriage, accounted in large part for their therapeutic effectiveness; and the same can be said for the air of wisdom and the paraphernalia of the horse and buggy doctor.

The illustrious William Henry Welch (1850-1934), who was the main architect of scientific medicine in the United States, recognized the importance of these purely psychological aspects of healing. He had seen them in operation in the medical practice of his own father, William Wickham Welch, who was a physician in Norfolk, Connecticut. The Norfolk community had implicit faith in all the "Welch doctors" who had begun practice in that town around 1780 and who had been successful in it for several generations. "The instant he (William Wickham Welch) entered the sick room, the patient felt better. The art of healing seemed to surround his physical body like an aura; it was often not his treatment but his presence that cured." Francis Peabody's famous remark, "The secret of the care of the patient is in caring for the patient," is another way of stating that there is a miraculous moment when the very presence of the doctor is the most effective part of the treatment.

Modern physicians have given up the props of their predecessors and have greater confidence in scientific knowledge than in pomposity or even loving care. Admittedly, they still find it useful to inspire comfort and confidence in their patients by a good "bedside manner" but they know that many pathological conditions cannot be significantly influenced by psychological means. On the other hand, it is still true that a very large percentage of the physical and mental ailments that lead people to seek medical help can be corrected by ways of healing that do not depend on scientific medicine. In the final analysis, most ways of healing depend on self-healing.

Although little is known as yet concerning the mechanisms through which the mind influences the body's natural resistance to physical and mental disease, there is no valid excuse for placing the phenomena of self-healing in a mystical domain beyond the realm of the scientific method. A widely held view is that a few common organic pathways are involved in the operations of healing agencies as diverse as ataractic drugs, transcendental meditation, the use of biofeedback techniques, Zen and Yoga practices, faith in a saint, a person, or a substance—and of course the proper patient-doctor relationship.

In a similar spirit, the Harvard physiologist Walter Bradford Cannon (1871-1945) published in 1942 an article in which he reviewed several cases of voodoo death that had been authenticated by competent anthropologists. He suggested that voodoo death and similar pathological phenomena can be accounted for by the profound metabolic disturbances that always accompany emotional states—a view that has recently been further developed by other physiologists. In that article as well as in others, Cannon stated that, furthermore, "the cults of the mental healers" also are amenable to investigation by the scientific method. He bemoaned that many biologists "do not see the organism because of the organs," and therefore tend to neglect some of the most important biomedical aspects of human life.

Despite Cannon's admonitions, scientific medicine has achieved its greatest successes by focusing attention not on the organism as a whole but rather on isolated organs, and especially on cellular structures and functions. At the present time, this kind of knowledge forms the corpus of scientific medicine, but there are indications that medicine may soon enlarge its scope and become more holistic. According to Dr. John Ellis, dean of the London Hospital Medical College, "The practice of medicine in Britain today . . . is far more holistic and personal than it was forty years ago. Doctors are . . . now much more concerned with the patient and much less with the disease."

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A few facts have been learned concerning the psychological, neural, and metabolic processes, as well as the environmental influences that are involved in self-healing. When scientific physicians state that the role of the healer is to help the patient overcome a sense of helplessness and disconnectedness, and thus regain control over his body, they have in mind a variety of phenomena that can be documented by fairly precise observations and that may even be amenable to experimentation. In this light, it may become possible for laboratory scientists to acquire knowledge of the mechanisms involved in self-healing and thereby to achieve a better control over its use in therapy.

"While we doctors often overlook or are ignorant of our own faith cures," wrote Osler in 1901, "we are a wee bit too sensitive about those performed outside our ranks." If Osler were still living today, he would certainly watch with interest and approval the present efforts to make the study of placebos, voodoo death, and the various forms of self-healing a legitimate part of experimental medicine.

Medicine will not become fully scientific until it has come to grips with the problems of social pathology and of emotional disturbances, as well as with the mechanisms that Osler had in mind when he wrote of "the faith that heals." A medicine based exclusively on the body-machine concept of human nature will soon be as obsolete as the equipment of the horse and buggy doctor and the gold-headed cane of the nineteenth-century physician.

Brain

is
most like
a priest

who revels in
the body's feast

and says
too much
and asks
how long

and sings his own
electric song

until he totters
on his shelf
and as he falls
forgives himself.

JOHN STONE

JOHN STONE is a physician in Atlanta, where he teaches at Emory University School of Medicine. His first book of poems is *The Smell of Matches.*

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Life and Letters

State of the Lingo

ARISTIDES

Can you imagine the stir it would have caused had either of the candidates in last autumn's presidential campaign pledged, if elected, to inaugurate a Department of Language with a Secretary of Language at its head? I can imagine the stir. It would, I think, have been nonexistent. Yet why not such a department? A nation's language, after all, is on the order of a natural resource—subject, like the others, to depletion, the ravages of pollution, thoughtless neglect. If such a department were to come into being, future presidents, somewhere toward the middle-end of their state of the union messages, might be able to report: "The Secretary of Language has informed me that over the past year our strength in verbs has not in any way diminished, adjectives of great pungency are being developed in the Northwest, and for the first time in decades profanity has become interesting once again." Alas, we are not soon likely to hear such messages about the state of the American language, even though, as anyone who has thought about it will agree, the American language appears to be in quite a state.

The notion of a Department of Language—or, more modestly, an American Academy like unto the French Academy in its function of, to quote the royal edict establishing it, working "with all the care and all the diligence possible at giving sure rules to our language, and rendering it pure, eloquent, and capable of treating the arts and sciences"—is one with a long, though not consistently distinguished, history in the United States. John Adams was perhaps the first to propose such an academy for the United States when he wrote from abroad in 1780 suggesting an academy be set up for "correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English language." In England, another country without an academy, Matthew Arnold wrote about the benefits such institutions can confer in connection with "the *ethical* influences of style in language—its close relations, so often pointed out, with character," though adding that "such an effort to set up a recognized authority, imposing on us a high standard in matters of intellect and taste, has many enemies in human nature." In the United States the banner was soon picked up by lesser people than Adams and Arnold; it was picked up by the dry-as-dust pedagogues and by the schoolmarms: the crusaders for purity of the kind that H. L. Mencken so loved to castigate. "In 1915," he wrote in *The American Language*, "the National Council of Teachers of English, following that hopeful American custom which gave the nation Mothers' Day, and Safety-First, Paint-Up-Clean-Up, and Eat-More-Cheese Weeks, proposed to make the first seven days of November Better-Speech Week." Mencken is probably correct; the crusade for purity of language, or at least for correctness, is doubtless lost because of the nature of the crusaders. Careful language has had a bad press.

But greater difficulties are involved in establishing an American Academy, and chief among them would be selecting the people to serve on such a body. In the composition of the recently published *Harper's Dictionary of Contemporary Usage*, the volume's authors, William and Mary Morris, used the assistance of a 136-member panel of "prominent writers, editors, public speakers, educators, and commentators." This is too great a number by far. In fact, I have recently noted that one of their panelists, Shana Alexander, in a letter to the *New York Times Book Review* in connection with a review of a book by Betty Friedan, writes that it seems to her "all the

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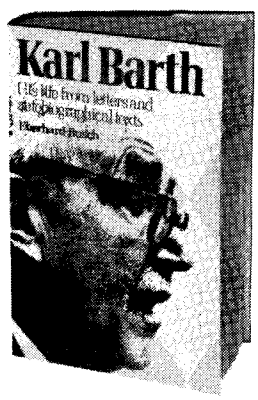

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paranoia is on the other foot"—a condition that would appear to call for a podiatrist with psychiatric training. No, any Department of Language or Academy for the American Language would require people with clearer minds and more careful pens than that.

Most useful would it be to have someone noted for stringency in matters linguistical, someone as stringent as the late Edmund Wilson was—taking time out, even when reviewing books he generally admired, to apply the corrective bastinado. Here is Wilson doing his necessary chore in a review of a work by George Kennan, himself the most elegant of prose writers among our diplomats and a man who has given ample evidence of caring about how language is used:

> Mr. Kennan, though so careful a scholar, with so fine an appreciation of literature, is in some ways rather careless as a writer. He habitually uses *transpire* as if it meant *occur* and *disinterestedness* as if it meant *lack of interest*. He makes "a series of demands" plural and uses wrongly a plural "protagonists" (you can have only one protagonist in any given situation). He writes, "The country was *rampant* with hardship and disease" and "He finally succeeded . . . in licking the heavy financial problem which the depression had *spelled* for the German government. . . ." It may well be that Mr. Kennan, with his new official duties, had not time to attend to these matters, but his publishers ought to have done so. They have left Mr. Kennan's expression sometimes limping behind his intellect.

Along with the tough-mindedness of an Edmund Wilson, generosity of a kind is also wanted. The generosity of H. L. Mencken, for example, whose love of colorful slang and useful neologisms runs through the pages of *The American Language*. Mencken, that so often contradictory man, made his mark ridiculing the "booboisie," yet ended his days praising "the national fancy for the terse, the vivid, and, above all, the bold and imaginative" in language. In a footnote in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* Gibbon remarks: "There is room for a very interesting work, which should lay open the connection between the languages and manners of nations." In *The American Language* H. L. Mencken produced precisely such a book for the United States.

Mencken was without linguistic snobbery, even though in his own writing he sported a vocabulary rife, as he might put it, with rococosities. Good linguistic sense he had in plenty. Fending off the British attack on American "barbarisms," he wrote in *The American Language:* "*Movie* is better than *cinema;* and the English begin to admit the fact by adopting the word; it is not only better American, it is better English. *Bill-board* is better than *hoarding*. *Office-holder* is more honest, more picturesque, more thoroughly Anglo-Saxon than *public-servant*." Yet Mencken also styled himself a "specialist in morbid philology." He was, in this connection, a good man with the literary knout, which he was prepared to lay on liberally when confronted with a pretentious style. His likening the prose style of Warren G. Harding to "a rhinoceros liberating himself by main strength from a lake of boiling molasses" is unforgettable.

The membership of the French Academy is limited to forty; ten might do for an American Academy, though it is doubtful that even ten members could be found whose authority would go undisputed. They would have to be chosen without regard to the niceties of affirmative action or tokenism of any sort. The kind of person who would qualify would probably not be interested, simply because he would recognize the task to be nearly a full-time one. The job at hand, after all, would be essentially constabulary; not still another honorific body, but a linguistic police force would be required.

The fact is that things have not quite worked out for our language as its friends have prophesied. Walt Whitman's ecstatic prediction about the English language in America is not coming true: "The Americans are going to be the most fluent and melodious voiced people in the world—and the most perfect users of words." From the other shore, Virginia Woolf wrote in 1925: "The Americans are doing what the Elizabethans did—they are coining new words. They are instinctively making the language adapt itself to their needs." Alas, would it were still so. That last sentence of Virginia Woolf's, for instance, edited for a contemporary American audience of the college-educated, would read: "The thrust of internal pressure deriving from new lifestyles is causing alterations in

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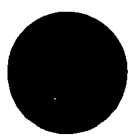

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linguistic patterns to comply with national felt needs that are ongoing."

Resisting change is not at issue. "The essence of language," Otto Jespersen long ago and truly wrote, "is activity." About this point no dispute is possible. New words come in, old words go out; and in the verbal traffic of the United States it is always rush hour. There is nothing for it, except regret when a good word gets lost and distaste when a bad word is discovered. When a good word departs, it departs alone; but a bad word seems to send for relatives soon after its arrival. Thus that atrociously bad word "lifestyle" has brought in its train the equally atrocious "life-stance"; and from the other side of the family we now have "mindstyles" (a man named Nathaniel Lande has recently published a book entitled *Mindstyles/Lifestyles*), and, in the September 1976 issue of *Esquire*, the phrase "differing life and speech styles" crops up. Can birthstyle and death-stance be far behind?

Calling words "good" and "bad," though plain talk, is also moral talk. In his essay "The Literary Influence of Academies," Matthew Arnold spoke of "freaks" in dealing with language, noting that they "tend to impair the power and the beauty of language." For an example Arnold cited nothing more heinous than the *Times* of London regularly misspelling the word "diocese" as "diocess." "Some people," he writes, "will say these are little things; they are not; they are of bad example. They tend to spread the baneful notion that there is no such thing as a high correct standard in intellectual matters; that every one may as well take his own way; they are at variance with the severe discipline necessary for all real culture; they confirm us in habits of willfulness and eccentricity, which hurt our minds, and damage our credit with serious people."

By now, of course, things have gone well beyond the orthographic antics mentioned by Matthew Arnold. Reality is at issue, as is the capacity of words to capture it. The objection to the word "lifestyle" is that it is at too many removes from reality; in its contemporary usage are implied a number of assumptions about life that are belied by experience. Chief among these is an assumption about the absolute plasticity of character—change your lifestyle, change your life—that is simply not true; and the popularity of the word "lifestyle" is testimony to how much people want to believe it. One criterion for a bad word, then, is that it is too distant from reality.

Another criterion for badness is vagueness, especially a word or phrase that seems to promise a great deal and delivers very little. The slang phrases "putting it all together" and "getting it all together" are examples. I recall once asking a class how it would define success; the words money, fame, or power did not arise in response. Instead one student said that "success is a way of putting it all together." Ah, but could he describe what "it" might look like when once assembled? He could not. The same sort of vagueness infests another slang phrase: "He's (or she's) got his head screwed on straight." One senses a certain seriousness attributed to the person about whom this is said, but what I should still like to know is in which direction his newly screwed down head is facing.

Then there are crock words. A word that has no real meaning at all is essentially—to use a good new slang word—a "crock." Atop the list of words with no real meaning is "meaningful." Jimmy Carter has told us, through the journalism of Norman Mailer, that his major prayer is: "Let me live my life so that it will be meaningful." Mailer, in writing about Carter for the *New York Times Magazine*, was greatly taken by that. But whatever can Carter have meant by meaningful? Hitler was meaningful, so was Gandhi, and Attila the Hun, and Jesus Christ, and Josef Stalin, and Saint Francis of Assisi. What Carter means only God knows, but since he is using the word in a prayer, perhaps that is sufficient. Crock words generally come in various lengths and degrees of difficulty, and they tend to be more popular among literary men than among sociologists. Norman Mailer's "sensuous silence" is a crock phrase of some simplicity; and "the deconstructured self," a coinage of the literary critic Leo Bersani, is a crock that runneth over.

Other criteria for bad words are available. Some words are intrinsically ugly: the phrase "psychic mobility" has the look of being surrounded by barbed wire, placed there to keep out understanding. Other words become ugly because they are misused, such as the un-

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grammatical "hopefully" favored by Robert Dole during the presidential campaign. (Linguistically, one might say that the election offered a meaningful choice, hopefully.) Other words are used with a boring repetitiveness, such as what I have come to think of as the "California Hey," or the tendency of a great many California people under fifty to begin all sentences with the word "Hey," as in "Hey, who was that fine lady I saw you with last night?" But by far the greatest number of bad words and phrases qualify under the criteria set down above: they are removed from reality, they are vague, they are without meaning.

Whence does this shabby language derive? In 1906 Henry James, in *The American Scene*, under the rubric "The Fate of the Language," remarked upon his " 'lettered' anguish . . . for the linguistic tradition as one had known it." He concluded: "The accent of the very ultimate future, in the States, may be destined to become the most beautiful on the globe and the very music of humanity (here the 'ethnic' synthesis shrouds itself thicker than ever); but whatever we shall know it for, certainly, we shall not know it for English—in any sense for which there is an existing literary measure." James might have been shocked to learn that, contrary to his prediction, careful English was not being spoiled from the bottom up but rather the other way round. Surely most of the bad language of today seems to come from what we are pleased to call the educated classes. Edward Shils has formulated this very point with precision. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, according to Professor Shils, many additions to the American language "arose from striking experiences and they had a kind of sardonic humor about them, especially those which came from the lower classes, which seemed to bespeak the rugged experience which persons in those classes characteristically could not avoid. . . . Many of the unpleasant words of the present are manufactured not from experience but from doctrine."

No mystery about what these doctrines are: they are the doctrines of psychology and sociology, of military strategy and political science, of technology and literary and art criticism. Bad language is no longer picked up on the streets but in the classroom, where flatulence is featured. From the college classrooms it fans out into the media—and also filters down into grade and secondary schools—so that even if one is not able to go to college one still gets it all, through television and the press, by what is in effect a correspondence course.

A most interesting new book touching on all these issues, questions, and problems has the uncatchy title *6,000 Words: A Supplement to Webster's Third New International Dictionary*. Although available in a trade edition, *6,000 Words* is essentially the addenda section of *Webster's Third*, which first appeared in 1961, and it serves, in the words of its editors, two purposes: "to record as many as space will permit of the new words and meanings that have become established since *Webster's Third* was edited and to enter those older words that for various reasons had been passed over in earlier editing." But another purpose is served, that of a chronicle of what we in the United States have been thinking and doing over the past fifteen years.

Room enough can be found in these 6,000 entries for inspiration as well as despair. To make handy use of one of its own fresh entries, the book provides a "curate's egg" ("something with both good and bad parts or qualities") of evidence, which I shall get to presently. But first something needs to be said about the experience of reading *6,000 Words*. It is, I think, a book to read straight through, rather than to skip and skim around in. Going through its pages can best be likened to going through the pages of a snapshot album, but with this decisive difference: the feeling one comes away with is not nostalgia but something closer to its opposite, historical revulsion. "Car coat," "hot pants," "hipsterism," "hippiedom," "rap session," "sensitivity training," "teeny bopper"—those were the days, my friend, thank God they're at an end.

As a supplement to *Webster's Third*, *6,000 Words* continues the *Third's* permissive principles. That is to say, no standards are invoked for inclusion of a word, except that it show up with sufficient frequency in contemporary speech and writing. The definitions, as the editors note, "are based not on an editor's idea of what words ought to mean but rather on the meanings actually given to words by

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the speakers and writers of English who use them." I should prefer a more prescriptive dictionary, one that notes, where called for, that an entry is a "cant" word, to use the term Dr. Johnson used in his *Dictionary*. I prefer this not out of grundyism, but because I doubt if a language can long survive in health under a policy of (to use another new entry from *6,000 Words*) "open admissions." *6,000 Words*, then, is nearly useless as a guide but excellent as a record. Like the period it indirectly chronicles, it is itself a curate's egg.

A historian of the future, with only *6,000 Words* as evidence, would deduce that over the past fifteen years the most exciting activity in American life has been in science, medicine, and technology. "Science and technology," the editors of the volume note, "are probably the most prolific providers of new words today." Judging from its bulk of new words, we have been living in a most productive period for space exploration, physics, mathematics, biology (especially genetics), and computer engineering. The linguistic legacy is sometimes poetic—"damsel bug" is charming and astronomers' "black hole," which puts in an appearance between "Black English" and "black comedy," has an unrelenting fascination. More often, though, the language of science remains impenetrable to the outsider: "cycasin," "BAL," and thirteen different words beginning with the suffix "cryro" do not comfortably roost in the memory.

Elsewhere this same historian will find ours to have been a time of either enormous deceit or enormous wariness about being deceived. "Credibility gap," "hype," "shuck," "rip off," "fink out," "co-opt," "cop-out," and "gazump"—this last a British import, meaning to cheat or swindle—came into prominence. Life had its "hassles" and its "nonevents." (It also had its "media events," a phrase that did not make it into *6,000 Words*.) It will have seemed less a sexy than a sex-ridden time, when such words as "gayola," "group grope," "erotology," "fellate" (a verb), "dyke," and "hickey" were bruited about—a time when a need arose for the word "hetero" and people gave one another the "bird." The "funky" seemed "foxy" and the "flaky" frequently "flipped." "Far out!" was a common exclamation, as people "got it on," or, as the case may have been, "got it off." "Hardhats" and "hardliners" never listened to "hard rock" nor went into "head shops," although some "honkies" wore "hip huggers" and ate "hoagies." Linguistically, it was a good time for "underachievers."

What, to ask the Chernyshevskian question, is to be done? I recall reading some years ago about a small left-wing magazine that asked that question and answered it by saying, "Nothing, absolutely nothing," and then promptly folded. But a great language does not fold; instead it slowly rots. Does language affect life, or does it merely reflect it? Negro slang, for example, was once by far the most inventive in America, with, among other words, "vines" standing for clothes, "sky" for hat, till a man's wardrobe took on the delights of a landscape. But in recent years this same slang has grown snorting and sullen: "honky," "pig," "get off my case." Shoes, which often used to be called "kicks," are now more often called "stomps." The new slang is a reflection of anger, and also of taking advantage of the opportunity to express anger openly, but one wonders if it is not also an aid to anger.

In writing about language, in considering the state of the lingo, there is always a tendency to assume a prelapsarian time—a linguistic Eden where language was once clear and crisp and fitted exactly its function. Bad language has, of course, always been with us: language meant to obscure, to deceive, to defraud. Yet I have recently been reading books by and about John D. Rockefeller, once the most hated man in America, who, although he never went to college, wrote better prose than any political scientist I can name. Doubtless this had to do with the fact that Rockefeller sedulously read the Bible, and suffered neither lexical impoverishment nor the hunger for innovation that is now endemic and that calls for changing one's vocabulary, like one's tires, roughly every three years. Today one cannot tell industrialists from political scientists; they both talk and write like bureaucrats who studied sociology. Examples abound—and from every field.

The literary critic Tony Tanner, in the *Times Literary Supplement*, writes of the literary critic Edward Said: ". . . he clearly has a massively informed inwardness with a

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whole other culture." Edmund Wilson has remarked about "massive": "I have also written before of this stupid and oppressive word, which seems to have become since then even more common as a ready cliché that acts as a blackout on thinking." Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who enjoys language as has no other man in public life in this country for decades, must have missed reading Wilson on this point, for in his senatorial campaign he remarked that his opponent was "a man who consistently and massively and only says 'no' to the tradition of decent liberalism that New York State has always stood for."

Things are no better lower down. Mark Fidrych, the splendid pitcher of the Detroit Tigers, can scarcely get out a sentence without half a dozen "rights," "mans," "you knows," and "heys." When he does, what emerges is the following: "I never envisioned anything because that's looking in the future, right?" Next to Mark Fidrych, Dizzy Dean sounds like Balliol, Casey Stengel like the Old Vic. Why does a man as intelligent as Julian Bond say, as he did in a recent interview, "There was no provision for citizen input"? (Has he been linguistically co-opted by IBM?) In the same publication, the magazine *Southern Exposure*, we learn that "Chip Hughes is the Research Director of the Institute for Southern Studies, currently focusing on occupational safety and health issues." (If he, or is it the Institute?, doesn't stop focusing, he, or it, will develop a squint.) Why does a literary critic write to congratulate me on an essay I have written by saying that the essay is "eminently sane"? (Does it mean that other things I have written have been only moderately, or possibly barely, sane?) Who invented the hideous phrase "pick your brain"? Was it the same person who thought up "whatshisface"? Can any student tell why he likes a book without using the words "relate to" or "identify with"? Is there ever a "breakthrough" that is not "unprecedented"? Whose coinages are "prolongevity" and "relaxaction"? Is he the same man who put "the quality of" into the phrase "quality of life programs"? Or is he the man who put the "out" into "check out"? (Must make a note to check it—out.) What does "off the wall" mean? Does "reductive" ever mean anything other than that one considers the person one is applying it to as less clever than oneself? When John Hawkes is described in the *New York Times Book Review* as "Feasibly America's Best Novelist," are we to assume that one of that journal's editors formerly worked for an insurance company? Where did people in the State and Defense departments acquire the odious phrases "nuts and bolts," "nitty gritty," and "the goodies"? Which is the deader word: "thrust" or "impact"? Why does my own beloved alma mater, the University of Chicago, offer an award to someone judged "Communicator of the Year"? Has this award something to do with eradicating disease; if so, why give it to a communicator? Puzzling, all of it, very puzzling.

These questions may be taken as the rantings of a crank. Very well. Yet, if crank one must be, a language crank at this moment seems to me perhaps the least useless kind. For the only answer I can devise to the question of what is to be done about the state of language in America is to develop more cranks—a national posse of cranks. Limits to crankishness must be set, of course. "Laugh at a man's language," Herbert Agar once wrote, "and you have laughed at the man himself in the most inclusive sense." I, for one, cannot bring myself ever to correct anyone in private, but anyone who uses language publicly—a writer, politician, teacher, journalist—anyone who lives off language without caring about it seems to me fair game. Such people ought to be made to feel, wherever possible, the sting of criticism; or, as many of them might put it, their "success experience must every now and then be interrupted by a sound rejection phenomenon."

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At Home in America

(To R. G.)

PETER GAY

THERE ARE ALMOST AS MANY BICENTENNIALS as there are Americans. I discovered this some months ago, in the course of a conversation about my German origins. I discovered that to respond to America's anniversary required me to lapse into autobiography, to ask myself what America had made of me or, better, what I had made of myself in America. A friend asked me, in passing, "And do you feel at home in America?" It took me aback, not because I found the question impertinent but because I thought the answer obvious. Of course I was at home in America. And it seemed to me at that moment, as it does now, that this categorical and confident reply was a tribute far less to my adaptability than to the country that had permitted me to offer it without a moment's hesitation. It was my private celebration of the bicentennial.

In truth, I had been infatuated with America for several years before I saw the country, before I could be sure that I would ever see it. I claim no special prescience for this anticipatory passion: it was natural for a boy entering adolescence in Nazi Germany and being told, with ugly and emphatic reiteration, that he was Jewish—which meant, in the official vocabulary, subhuman. For me Roosevelt's America was in every respect what Hitler's Germany was not: a land of justice and freedom. I have called it Roosevelt's America, for it was that to me. The Nazis had in the beginning courted the New Deal president, in whose policies they professed to see some promising parallels to their own, but had soon cooled to FDR. Unlike some Americans then and now, they learned that those parallels were superficial. Increasingly, as the 1930s wore on, FDR became for me the voice of conscience, which I heard—in translation—on our radio equipped to receive more than the official news on the official channels, a radio to which I listened with my family, keeping the sound turned low and the blinds drawn. And I heard of other Americans—mostly names but glorious names to me—who detested the Nazis strongly and loudly enough to draw blood in the controlled German

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press. One such glowing name was Cardinal Mundelein, although I knew nothing about him except that his opinion of my oppressors was supremely uncomplimentary. Another was Fiorello La Guardia, and he became more than a name to me. Sometime around 1936, after he had particularly displeased the Nazis, the Berlin newspapers placed his profile next to that of a chimpanzee, inviting some unflattering comparisons. It made him my hero; however simian his appearance, he had stung the German government. These heroes, our potential rescuers, were all Americans.

The first opportunity to act on my affection for the United States came in the summer of 1936, when I was thirteen, at the Olympic Games in Berlin. My father, a sports enthusiast both canny and resourceful, had managed to secure two tickets for them when he had been in Budapest four years earlier. So we went to the Berlin Olympics for a week—to watch the American athletes dominate the track and field events, to cheer them on, to send up a few fervent secular prayers that Hitler, whom we could see in his box across the field, should feel duly humiliated as Negroes swept one gold medal after another. Surrounded as we were by a small but noisy Hungarian contingent, we could release our feelings with impunity. I shall never forget the women's relay race—it remains one of the great moments of my life. The German sprinters, finely tuned and exhaustively trained, were clear favorites, and I grew increasingly dispirited as the final events approached. The Teutonic Amazons were going to win for the Führer, and I had to sit still to watch their triumph and his gloating face. The United States, I knew, had put together a strong team, led by Helen Stevens, but their hopes for first place were slender. As the race unfolded before us, it developed true to form: the German sprinters made, and widened, their lead. Yet for all their superb timing and military discipline, they faltered at the final transfer of the baton. Now, forty years later, my father's voice still reverberates in my ear. Jumping to his feet in his excitement, one of the first among the more than a hundred thousand spectators to see the decisive mishap, he shouted, "The Germans have dropped the baton!" And as the German women athletes trotted off the field weeping, the Americans loped home for yet another gold medal.

The story seems trivial now, but the event was beautiful then and pregnant with meaning. My love for America fed on my hatred for Germany. Here, before my astonished eyes, poetic justice had triumphed. It meant I would not have to rise with secret rage to listen to the interminable playing of the Nazis' "Horst Wessel Song," which, with "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles," was the Third

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Reich's anthem. Instead it meant standing up, as so often, for the American anthem, of which I then barely understood a word: "Oh say, can you see? . . ." That, too, was beautiful.

So was Jesse Owens, running and leaping to four gold medals in his effortless but wholly authoritative way. And so was that athlete incarnate, Glenn Morris, who amassed impressive scores in the decathlon to establish a new world's record and who, between events, would lie down on the green field in the stadium under the blazing sun, in full sight of the ranked masses, put a towel over his head, and, for all I knew, nap. They all seemed splendid exemplars of America. My pantheon was an indiscriminate and democratic gathering of athletes and politicians and priests. In this bicentennial year, I am persistently importuned to think of Jefferson and Franklin, and I respect, even admire, them for good and proper reasons. But they lack the resonance that only one's boyhood heroes can provide. I like to think instead of FDR and Jesse Owens, Cardinal Mundelein, and Glenn Morris.

In 1936, the year of the Berlin Olympic Games, my impractical infatuation with America assumed more realistic contours with the visit of one of my mother's older brothers, my "American uncle." His romantic history had long engaged my imagination. An unworldly, studious young man, a passionate violinist and fanatical chess player, he had met an American girl in Breslau in the early 1920s at the house of a chess partner, married her, and moved with her to her hometown in northern Florida. There he helped to manage one of the family's chain of prosperous hardware stores, played chess by correspondence, and traveled to Tallahassee with his wife, as gentle and cultivated as he, to catch an occasional touring virtuoso. In 1936 this favorite uncle—hypochondriacal, old-fashioned, and almost irrationally generous—came to Berlin to see his aging mother and to discuss with us all a schedule for emigration. It is hard to reconstruct our sober meetings of that summer; only two years later they seemed unrealistic, self-deceptive. But we could sit, my family and I, and set up a leisurely timetable by which my two cousins and I would move to the United States first, to be followed in the early 1940s by our parents and their various brothers and sisters.

My father, wholly assimilated, "Jewish" only by Nazi edict, content in his business, and reassured by loyal friends, did not then guess that the Nazis would soon brutally tear up our timetable. A moderate Social Democrat, a wounded and decorated veteran of the First World War, he felt little direct pressure on him. Had he been a politician or a journalist, he would have been dragged to a concentration camp in 1933, or forced into early exile. As it was, my father endured the usual anti-Semitic

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harassments and looked at the obscene world around him with a mixture of contempt and incredulity. Ironically enough, it was his gentile friends, "good" Germans all, who inadvertently disguised the reality of our situation and weakened our will to emigrate. My mother, frail, plagued by bouts with tuberculosis, was even more unwilling to leave the only world she had ever known, the country she claimed quite simply as her home. Like most other refugees from Hitler, we did not go gladly. We were forced to be free.

My uncle's visit made a caesura in my life. America, the fabulous land of opportunity, the country where you did not darn socks but threw them away, was now part of my program for the future. But it was my cousin Hanns, three years older than I, who was the first of the family to go. In 1937 he left for the United States. Among the first things he did was to translate his all-too-German, unpronounceable, and unspellable name, Fröhlich, into English. I do not know his motives. All I know is that when I finally managed to join him in America, I changed my own name. My reasons were more than mere convenience, more even than hatred of all reminders of the land I had barely escaped. Adopting an English-sounding name was a declaration of love for my new country, hopeful and a little pathetic at the same time. It was a statement concealing, and disclosing, a wish—the wish for a home. I am celebrating my personal bicentennial by recalling how soon, and how completely, my wish was granted.

That, of course, is the point of these reminiscences: not to rehearse my whole life, but to relive the moments that constitute one man's celebration of America. In the tortuous and eventful course of my emigration one person stands out: a physician at the American consulate in Havana. In the late 1930s, the United States showed its less forthcoming side. Confronted with desperate pleas to open its doors to Hitler's victims, U.S. officials took refuge in bureaucratic obstruction and legalist literalism. They admitted a full quota of immigrants no more, refusing to add places left unfilled from earlier years, or to borrow from other countries or from future quotas. After the *Anschluss* of Austria in March 1938, the German quota was slightly more than 28,000 a year, but the persons clamoring to be rescued were ten times that number. There were lifeboats, but not enough of them. We had made application too late to guarantee admission, and so in April 1939, when we finally got out of Germany, we went to Cuba to wait, rather than to the United States to live. And in Cuba we vegetated, idly, restlessly, glad to be alive but impatient to reach our true destination. I went to school to improve my English and my typing; my father was busy trying to rescue his remain-

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ing two sisters from the Nazis' hands; my mother, her tuberculosis in a virulent stage, went to a Cuban sanatorium.

Then, in December 1940, we were called to the American consulate to have our papers processed. There I encountered, once again, the America of my fond imagination. Potential immigrants had to have proper papers, respectable American sponsors, and good health. My mother went to her physical examination directly from the sanatorium—doped up, as I remember, with some stimulants to keep her upright for the grueling day. Nothing is easier to detect than tuberculosis, but the physician passed my mother as though she were the sturdiest woman alive. It may have been the indifference of a doctor rusticated to a boring consular assignment; it may have been sheer incompetence. I prefer to think it was kindness, a commodity that the rulers of my native country had outlawed as decadent. Whatever it was, it struck me as a supremely appropriate prologue to our entry into the land of my fantasies.

II

If I ever write at length about the Americanization of Peter Gay, I shall divide my account into two parts: the Denver experience, lasting for five years from 1941 to 1946; and the New York experience, beginning after that. The two phases complement one another: the first formed the foundation for the second; the second completed the work that the first had begun. In Denver, where my father and I settled to be near my mother, who was hospitalized there, I worked to help support my parents and, after two years, went to college. My mother's misfortune was, in a sense, my fortune. It propelled me to mid-America, far from the rest of my family, who had found a home in the South, and far from the massive colonies of German refugees huddled together in New York and San Francisco.

In Denver I lived and worked mainly among Americans, although there were hundreds of German refugees in that city, too. They made something of an extended family, drawn together by the common experience of acculturation and by a shared and growing anxiety over those German Jews still in Nazi hands—unable, as we put it, "to get out." Then, after Pearl Harbor, we acquired a common stigma: we were all declared enemy aliens, a status leniently perceived by the authorities and more absurd than onerous. The German exiles in Denver formed, as refugees will, a kind of government in exile; they read the same refugee newspaper, the indispensable *Aufbau;* they discussed American politics and military events, and explored over and over again, helplessly, with

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almost total futility, strategies for rescuing relatives and friends left behind. For many, their little world within a world, natural and benign as it was, became an obstacle to assimilation. It was a community of rumors and nostalgia. Everyone spoke German. Everyone retained a certain distance from the golden land to which we had come and which, on inspection, proved to be a demanding and not altogether generous democracy. Educated and cultivated professional men—doctors, lawyers, professors—found that their credentials counted for little. They were compelled to take menial jobs and undergo humiliating retraining, while their once spoiled and idle wives, who in Germany had never cooked or swept floors, heroically acquired domestic skills, working as maids or in factories to keep their families afloat.

I too worked hard, at jobs I could not have imagined in my gloomiest dreams. With my mother in the sanatorium and my father painfully learning English and unable to provide for us, I had to drop out of high school half a year before graduation. For more than a year I was a shipping clerk in a cap factory at sixteen dollars a week, stupidly packing officers' caps and G.I.'s overseas caps, standing among wrapping materials in a dirty work shirt, and living a deeply private fantasy life. It was the year of Joe DiMaggio's unprecedented fifty-six game hitting streak, and day after day I listened to the Yankee baseball broadcasts—rather vague about the game, nostalgic about the soccer games of my childhood, and hoping for a better life. I did not complain. I was protected from self-pity by the vigorous assaults my father liked to launch on the "Byunskis" among the refugees, for daring to find anything good about Germany or anything wrong with America. The epithet came from a cliché to which all too many refugees resorted: "*Bei uns* in Deutschland war alles besser." (With us in Germany everything was better.)

Besides, my belief in my own future never wavered. I do not think that I consciously told myself, as I packed shipment after shipment of caps, that I would not always be doing such menial work. I simply knew it. And this confidence was in itself a tribute to America. It represented a confluence of causes: from some unarticulated inner resources, from my parents' insistent high opinion of my talents, and, powerfully, from the American world in which I was so rapidly learning to find my way. In the evenings, after a long day's work, I would go to the Carnegie Library to read books with the kind of voraciousness that only one who has been starved can wholly appreciate. It was not until many years later, after I had become a professional historian, that I found a parallel in Gibbon's autobiography. Forced to do without his beloved classics during his service with the militia, he returned to them as soon as he could. "After

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this long fast," he wrote, "the longest which I have ever known, I once more tasted at Dover the pleasures of reading and thinking, and the hungry appetite with which I opened a volume of Tully's philosophical works is still present to my memory." Gibbon's culinary language precisely describes my own oral gratification in reading, although it was American and English literature, not Cicero, that gratified my appetite.

In the beginning, I did not know the difference between Upton Sinclair and Sinclair Lewis, and read their novels in sublime, innocent confusion. But I could learn, and America was encouraging me to learn. In those early and decisive years, when I was largely educating myself, I fell to reading the weekly essays that Malcolm Cowley was then writing for the *New Republic*: long, didactic reviews that introduced me to writers—Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster among them—of whom I had never heard, and whom I read with an uncritical joy of discovery that I have never forgotten and never recaptured. After some months, I could keep Upton Sinclair and Sinclair Lewis apart.

And everywhere—well, almost everywhere—there was American kindness. Not intrusive charity or offensive inquisitiveness, but a consistent decency, a receptivity to whatever gifts I might possess. Shabby in my appearance, awkward in my behavior, far from certain in my English, I could have been a figure of fun; and, for the well-scrubbed high school girls I was trying to impress, perhaps I was. But both of the teachers in whose classes I sat during my fleeting attendance at East High School in the fall and winter of 1941 seemed to see some promise in me, and they exercised their power for my benefit. The first, George Cavender, a most unorthodox teacher of civics, introduced me to Thurman Arnold; I think the first book I ever bought in the United States—a solemn moment in view of my poverty—was a one-dollar edition of Arnold's *Folklore of Capitalism*. It became a treasure to me, a bracing foretaste of many books I would buy in later years, buy—and write. Arnold's irreverent, tough-minded analysis of the political process captivated me, and I promptly began to work on a book-length manuscript of my own, boldly entitled "New Measures, New Men." I have only the faintest recollection of what this ambitious essay was supposed to demonstrate, but it is a measure of my unquenchable self-confidence that I sent it off to a publisher, to Harper, I think. They did not publish it, of course, and the manuscript is, fortunately, lost. But the force that generated it—Mr. Cavender's interest in me and his trust in my capacities—was not lost; it formed the kernel, however small, of all I would later dare to do.

A second East High teacher, Helen Hunter, who was lame and

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known by heartless youth as "Step-and-a-half Hunter," redirected my life in even more drastic fashion. One day, some months after I had had to exchange school for a job, she suddenly appeared at my mother's bedside in the National Jewish Hospital. I still do not know how she found her, but there she was, exuding authority and telling my mother it was a shame that someone like me should go through life without a diploma. Surely one day I would go to a university, and then I would need proof that I had graduated from high school. And she volunteered to arrange for that diploma by giving me a private tutorial in English. Accordingly, we met several times; I read Shakespeare with her and wrote a paper proving that Hamlet's madness was real, not feigned.

In the summer of 1943, I could appreciate her genial intervention, for I was admitted to the University of Denver. There, as I made friends among the students and faculty, my Americanization continued. I kept on working, in the evenings, on weekends, during vacations, fantasizing my way through ill-paying and mindless jobs. I sold shirts in a men's store, manned the cash register in a shoe store, dished out ice cream in a creamery. I walked through these jobs—doing them, no doubt, badly at times—unviolated and invulnerable, cherishing my mother's expectation that, with my interest in writing, I should become someone like Walter Lippmann. In fact, after only a year or so at the University of Denver, I began to write a weekly column on national and international politics, filled with confident and often ill-informed commentary on everything from the future of American liberalism to the prospects of the United Nations. Sometime during these years I read a news story about the daughter of a Supreme Court justice—William O. Douglas, I think—who spent her summer vacations earning pocket money as a soda jerk. It put my own working life into perspective. And in 1945 I even ran for student president, losing to an immensely popular football player by only six votes: 261 to 255. When, in May 1946, at the earliest legal moment, I became a U.S. citizen, I had already been a citizen in my mind for some years. Where but in America was such rapid acceptance even thinkable?

III

When I moved to New York in the fall of 1946, to attend graduate school at Columbia University, I came armored with that patriotic rhetorical question. I do not want to claim that I was serene. My six years under the Nazis had inflicted wounds that had not healed; their scars, I am sure, still show today. But I had a sense of optimism at once personal

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and public: my hopes for America, and what I read to be America's hopes for me, reinforced one another. That is why I found it galling to witness the degradation of a symbol when, in the 1950s and after, the Stars and Stripes came to be monopolized by McCarthyites and by chauvinists who sported bumper stickers reading "America: Love It or Leave It." I had for years greeted the American flag as the witness of yet another gold medal for Jesse Owens, an emblem not of reaction but of liberalism, of the effort not to suppress, but to foster, dissent. The new meaning of the American flag pained me, and I privately retained a double vision of it: it stood for hardhats beating up antiwar demonstrators; it also stood for American troops liberating Europe from the Nazi barbarians. Clearly America was more complex than I could have imagined in the 1930s, but it did not lose for me, nor has it ever lost, its aura of being man's last best hope.

The friends I made during my early years in New York, first as a graduate student and then, soon after, as an instructor at Columbia University, strengthened this ground tone of optimism—both by what they were and what they thought. This is not to say that their optimism or mine was untinged by disappointment, or untried by the American experience of the cold war and the intervention in Vietnam. But what united me with my best friends, the Hofstadters and the Robertses, quite apart from the magnet of personal affection, was their capacity to generate an intense atmosphere of political seriousness, made up of a capacity for enthusiastic engagement, free-swinging criticism, and fine discriminations. Like them, I vehemently and publicly opposed McCarthyism and, at the same time, the Stalinists who persisted in portraying the Soviet Union as flawless, on the defensive, innocent in the making of the cold war. In the presidential election of 1948, my first, I voted for Truman as a matter of course. A brief encounter with the Henry Wallace forces, who had usurped the clean-sounding name of Progressive Citizens of America, had convinced me that American fellow travelers were not simply misguided; they were actively undermining policies destined to prevent war-shattered Europe from becoming a Soviet satellite. It was a sobering and complex time in which one needed all the intellectual resources at one's command to thread one's way through the political maze. It was possible to believe that the Rosenbergs were guilty without thereby approving of their execution, or that Alger Hiss was guilty without discrediting, retrospectively, the New Deal, or even Hiss's anti-Nazi principles of the 1930s. (I had contributed to the Alger Hiss defense fund during his first trial, but changed my mind about his culpability after reading the transcript of that trial.) It was an essential and by no

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means easy part of my political education to introduce finer shadings into my uncritical portrait of America without, at the same time, falling from the extreme of idol worship to that of devil making. I could not take that fall any more than I could applaud the opposite course taken by so many rueful ex-communists, from totally rejecting America to fatuously embracing her.

What came to astonish me in the 1950s, as my circle of acquaintances widened, was that many of them—publishers, editors, professors, journalists—were oscillating precisely between such extremes. I am not suggesting that I can recollect all my political judgments without some embarrassment, or that all refugees were inoculated from extremism. Karl August Wittfogel, for one, was a refugee who had moved from his commitment to communism in the 1920s to a principled and, to me, wholly repugnant McCarthyism in the 1950s. After some heated evenings at his house, I refused to expose myself to further fruitless, and painful, debates. But I felt fortunate in being immune from what I took to be an often willful political blindness of two warring groups who disputed their ground at New York cocktail parties and on the Wellfleet beaches. The one group made me decide that anti-Americanism was becoming the anti-Semitism of the intellectuals; the other, that the patriotic protestations of repentant radicals had all the marks of the self-indulgent orgy of the prodigal son come home.

Another thing that astonished me about these combatants was that they had had from birth all the advantages I had had to acquire, in boyish imaginings and later in years of hard work. They had been born in America, gone to American schools, had lifelong American friends—never knowing what it meant to start again. Whether they celebrated their rediscovered home or denigrated it as the giant of reaction, I thought they were deliberately turning their backs on the American experience, an experience I was absorbing through every pore. Some of my colleagues predicted in 1953 and 1954, glumly and to my intense disbelief, that Joe McCarthy would become president in 1956. Their inability to read the evidence, to trust American institutions, and to distinguish between American bouts of repressiveness and systematic European totalitarianism struck me as a cultural masochism from which my rooted feeling for America protected me. Others, who took McCarthy's side, found it impossible to envisage another, less unjust and less vulgar, way of dealing with continuing sentimentality toward the Soviet Union, or whatever subversive infiltration of our government or press might actually exist.

One fine summer day at Wellfleet I had my epiphany. I understood, I

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thought, the causes of this double myopia. I was visiting the Hofstadters, and we were all on the beach, clustered in a large informal group, close friends and recent acquaintances drifting together to chat, to sunbathe, even to go swimming. And in this idyllic setting, one such acquaintance, an American teaching sociology at Princeton, got up, surveyed the drowsy, cheerful scene, and intoned in his euphoria: "Goyim, go home!" It was a self-isolating word that made islands of Jews hostile to the surrounding world, a word my father had taught me to detest. I got up and walked away.

This became more than an insignificant, if unpleasant, incident—a marker, I now see, on the way to my own bicentennial—because at that moment I overcame my irritated and self-satisfied reflection that I was above such vulgarity, and recognized that this sociologist was expressing a profound uneasiness. I could never have made such a remark because, ironically enough, I was at home in America and he was not. In a decade I had learned to have confidence that other Americans would help me, would see me not as an interesting and alien curiosity but as myself—in short, would accept me. To see America not as a treasure house to be exploited, but as a home in which to find my place, was equivalent to seeing all gentiles not as potential participants in pogroms but as possible friends. Paradoxically I, the immigrant, could live in this country with less fear, with less suspicion than this American-born social scientist, driven, perhaps in joke but anxiously enough, to construct barriers where there should only be free traffic.

But these reflections did not resolve the paradox; they only pushed it one step further. Why should I feel at home in America and he, American-born, feel himself an alien? I found the solution hard to accept; in fact, it took me many years even to glimpse it. I was at home in America because I had been at home in Germany; he was not at home in America because his forefathers had not been at home in Poland or in Galicia. He had absorbed, and unconsciously perpetuated, the wariness of his ancestors. He was successful, he was settled, he commanded a good salary and a wide public, but he was still living out of his suitcases. I had unpacked mine.

In many ways, this insight was nothing more than a return of what had been repressed. My father, for the first forty years of his life, had been a German, unquestioning, comfortable, cheerful. I was nearly ten in 1933, and fully as German as he. He would remind me, during the war and just after, when I persisted in mouthing clichés about collective German guilt and incurable German viciousness, of those Germans who had remained our friends through it all, taking great risks for our sake.

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Only after my memories of having been at home in Germany—memories that I had repressed with single-minded ferocity—re-emerged, could I interpret that scene on the Wellfleet beach in all its rich and puzzling significance.

I must place just one more candle on my bicentennial birthday cake. Children, we know, are rarely copies of their parents. The outside world invades their familial domain to modify, sometimes to correct, what they were taught in childhood. There was one perception that America had to give me to which my father could only imperfectly aspire. He had always energetically rejected collective verdicts; phrases like "all Americans" or "all Jews" invariably aroused his irritation. That is why he practically banished that ugly word *goy* from his vocabulary. Yet he continued to harbor one sweeping, though hardly violent, prejudice, the triumph of uninterpreted experience over cherished principles: he did not really like East European Jews. It was a symptom of remnants of insecurity, for he, like most other assimilated German Jews, feared that the invasion of Germany by *Ostjuden* must invariably feed anti-Semitism. He did not see, as many like him did not see, that the convinced anti-Semite needs no evidence to push his case. But I could see—for a hospitable America forced it upon my attention—that while collective terms like "German Jew" and "East European Jew" reflected the internecine warfare of which I saw a good deal in New York, they could not encompass the experience of individuals. Among Jews of whatever origins, there were many who had failed to master their past: German Jews in America who overvalued, in weary retrospect, the blessings of European culture at the expense of American vulgarity and materialism; East European Jews in America who brought to their new life anxieties far more appropriate to the persecuting regimes they had left behind. But there were also newcomers of all kinds who recognized that the world of their fathers was not any longer their own.

In our understandable revulsion against the clamor of empty-headed self-congratulation, we may find it all too easy to insist that the American dream is flawed. It is, but even so, in the repertory of human institutions, it remains a rare and precious success. Franklin Roosevelt's celebrated defiant phrase, "We are all immigrants," has been worn smooth with repetition and almost reduced to cant. But it struck me, when I first heard it, as a splendid foundation on which to build my life. It strikes me now, as I recall it, as a splendid ground for my celebration.

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English Visitors

HENRY FAIRLIE

HERE IS THE FUTURE: here is the great English empire to be when the Gauls and Cossacks have trampled on our freedom. . . . I almost feel young again as I drink up this young air." So wrote W. M. Thackeray to Lady Stanley on January 29, 1853, during a visit to Philadelphia. Whatever he saw or heard in America seemed to make him want to throw his hat in the air. In his letters home, he poured out his enthusiasm. He was in love with America, no less on his second visit than on his first. "I look at this," he had written to his daughter four days before, "and speculate on this bright Future, as an Astronomer of a Star; and admire and worship the beautiful goodness of God."

Not all travelers from Britain have been quite so enthusiastic in the past two hundred years, but they have been more generally appreciative than is realized by those who know only the "classics" of British observation of America, such as Charles Dickens and Mrs. Frances Trollope; and it is worth remembering that Dickens, as we know from his own letters, lost his temper very early during his first visit. He insisted on giving lectures on the American violation of the International Copyright Law—which was indeed a scandal—and when his hosts protested that this was not what he had been invited to lecture about, he, as we should say nowadays, "blew his cool." It was no help that at the same time he developed a fever and was confined to an overheated hotel room in New York, where he fumed and raged; and he did not recover his balance. As Stephen Leacock said, it was a tragedy that his powers of observation were so distorted, for he might well have given us *the* classic work of foreign observation of America.

I have immersed myself in the letters and occasional writings of more than two hundred British travelers to America. What is remarkable in them is how quickly at the beginning, and persistently in the following years, they addressed themselves to the themes that are still debated today—that are still relevant and in fact are still agitating. The sense of contemporaneity is surprising.

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Here is Thackeray, for example, writing to his daughter from Philadelphia in 1853, on the question of the future population of the country:

> There are 500000 people in this city about w^{h} we know so little—there's one street with shops on each side 6 miles long—there's New York with 700000—Boston, Cincinnati: scores of more vast places—only beginning and evidently in their early youth whereas we are past our prime most likely. Empires more immense than any the world has known are waiting their time here . . . in 50 [years] the population will treble that of Britain—Everybody prospers. There scarce are any poor. For hundreds of years there is room and food and work for whoever comes . . . and Truth will be spoken and Freedom will be practised.

Thirty-eight years later, Rudyard Kipling traveled across the Pacific on an American liner and arrived at San Francisco. He crossed the continent, as he put it, in six five-hundred-mile leaps, and prophesied:

> [In sixty years, by 1951], America will begin to crowd up, and there will be some trouble . . . the great American nation . . . very seldom attempts to put back anything that it has taken from Nature's shelves. It grabs all it can and moves on. But the moving-on is nearly finished and the grabbing must stop. . . . Yes; it will be a spectacle for all the world to watch, this big, slashing colt of a nation, that has got off to a flying start on a freshly littered course, being pulled back to the ruck by that very mutton-fisted jockey Necessity.

And almost a century later still, the argument between Thackeray and Kipling is very much alive: an argument between two visions of the new nation and its continental expanse, each of which is legitimate.

Until quite recently, the Englishman could not travel to America without setting aside a considerable amount of time for the journey; and in order then to cross the huge continent, he needed the same kind of time. The experience of voyaging to a new world, to a land that was an expression of something un-European, was therefore real to him, as in Hilaire Belloc's account of his arrival in 1924:

> After I had journeyed on the ocean many days, in no great comfort, for I did not travel as the rich travel, I came to a part of the sea where all things changed. It was in crossing the Grand Banks that I discovered the new air; I was appalled and vastly intrigued. I was coming to unknown things. . . . With every succeeding experience accumulated in day after day of multitudinous travel, this truth, that I had come . . . into an unknown world—grew within me. . . . it was, with every adjective and adverb I could use, alien, foreign, different, not Europe, not Africa, not the Old World at all.

Even after ten years, I still feel this *difference:* that America is more different from every country of Europe than any country of Europe is

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different from every other. Perhaps it is two hundred years old, but it simply is not of the Old World.

The sense of the geography of America may seem to tell only of a commonplace, but in fact it is important. On July 5, 1835, Richard Cobden wrote to his brother from Boston that he had, during his travels, fallen "into the fanciful belief that the Western continent was brought forth at a second birth, and intended by nature as a more perfect specimen of her work" than the Old World; and this impression was to stay strong in him. In 1857, he wrote to a friend, Henry Ainsworth, that it struck him that Europe was "a mere experiment in world-making on a small scale, whilst the American continent had been reserved for the crowning triumph of creation." This from a leader of the triumphant industrial middle class in Britain!

In our own time, Cyril Connolly has left us one of the most vivid impressions of the geography of the country, as observed from a plane in 1953, before aircraft flew too high and too fast for the land to be seen. It needs to be quoted in full. It is not just a piece of travel writing. It makes a fundamental point with dramatic power:

> The night plane circles round La Guardia, leaves behind the icy water of the Sound and that sinister Stonehenge of economic man, the Rockefeller Center, to disappear over the Middle West. Vast rectangles of light occasionally indicate Chicago or some other well-planned city, till at six in the morning we ground in the snow of Omaha. As it grows light the snow-fields over the whole agricultural region of the Middle West grow more intricate, the Great Plains give way to the Bad Lands, poison ivy to poison oak, the sinuosities of the Platte River to the High Plains, the mountains of Wyoming, the Continental Divide. All semblance of European structure vanishes; Salt Lake appears as a radiant lunar landscape in the wan sunshine, with the Great Salt Lake Desert glistening beyond it, fading into other deserts, and, at last, into the formidable Carson Sink. It is hard to picture the immense desolation of the West in winter, the wilderness of snow lying over fifteen hundred miles of plateau and mountain, till suddenly, unfrozen, among the pinewoods of the Rockies, a blue alpine lake appears, Lake Tahoe, and beyond a great glowing explosion of orange sky, woods without snow, green hills, with no trace of winter, the darker patches of citrus orchard, the line of irrigation canals, the Sacramento Valley—California and the enormous pale Pacific.

The key to this passage is the sentence in which Connolly explodes: "All semblance of European structure vanishes"; yet the vast expanse has a visible structure of its own, partly from nature, partly made by man, which he brilliantly captures.

The same kind of flight had been made in 1940 by Louis MacNeice, and he wrote of the elegance of the American landscape with a poet's

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eye: "enormous plains of beautifully inlaid rectangles, the grain running different ways, walnut, satinwood or oatcake, the whole of it tortoise-shelled with copses and shadows of clouds, and here and there little lakes nailed down on top of the ground." But what are these inlaid patterns but the marks of one of the most remarkable agricultures in the history of the world? It is common for the American when he is in Europe to gasp at the hedgerows of England or the terraced vineyards of Italy. But the gasp of the European is no less when he gazes on a country, immense in scale, still fabulous in its diversity, which is not only cultivated, but has by its cultivation been given its own coherence; which unlike Europe—a continent so much smaller yet torn by so many wars—has been made one.

I will not here attempt my own description of the landscape: whether of a journey by road from Washington to Atlanta that took me more than eight weeks, or of an astonishing two-day drive that carried me the 1,130 miles from Denver to Houston. Since planes now fly too high to enable one to see anything very well for very long, and since this country, which was made for trains (as it was made by them), has abandoned them, the only way to get a sense of the continental expanse of the nation is to use the highways; and that is exactly what the young of America are now doing. They are crisscrossing the country in their cars and their vans, and they are amazed by it. I have been with them on some of the legs of their journeys; I have listened to them when they tumble into Washington or Boulder, Colorado, or Houston after one of their odysseys. It is not just that they are amazed by the landscape, its diversity and the diversity of the peoples within it, but they are amazed also at the *room* there is in their country for people to pursue a thousand ways of living. With the room, the freedom; with the freedom, the sense of expansiveness. They are not "on the road," as was Kerouac; they are usually going somewhere for a purpose—to a university, for a job—but they travel their country as they do so, and are exhilarated.

In this they are responding in their own terms, in much the same way as the English travelers who moved from their wondering apprehension of the mere geography of America to their proclamations that here was something new. The most obvious point may be quickly made. We live today in a world of vast subcontinental" powers; and America has, from its beginnings, been the only one of these powers that has managed to govern so huge an expanse while remaining free. (Canada and Australia are not populous enough to be counted in this context.) Two hundred years ago, David Hume wondered if the experiment could succeed, but concluded that America might manage it, if it retained its unique combination of a federal structure and representative government. But it

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is little wonder that the world still gazes on America, half-believing, half-disbelieving that its myriad peoples in their immense territory can be governed *and* be free.

"All semblance of European structure vanishes"; and from the beginning, of course, the English visitor noticed that it vanished also in the manners of the society. The real contrast between the observations of, say, Frances Trollope and those of Harriet Martineau is that the former recoiled from the informality of American life, while the latter, herself a firework of informality and irreverence at home, found it enjoyable. Today the Englishman may still demur at the easy use of his first name, and sympathize with Lord Halifax who, when he was ambassador during the Second World War, was reluctantly persuaded that Anglo-American cooperation depended on his willingness to call General Watson by his nickname, "Pa"—picking up the telephone like a rattlesnake, and inquiring in a husky voice, "Is that you, P-P-Pa?" The effect on General Watson was instantaneous, and the alliance was saved; but one may perhaps be allowed to say that only the exigencies of war could justify the terrible personal cost which was demanded of Lord Halifax.

It is not only the informality in private life that has struck the English visitor; he has wondered at the extreme informality even on public occasions. An English monk, Dom Hubert van Zeller, who often preached at retreats in both countries and who enjoyed the United States, nevertheless could not help expressing his astonishment when he addressed upward of six hundred nuns in a hall in Denver, assembled from different religious communities, "all of whom were eating ices off the end of sticks." Since the distribution of the ices "by the home team" took place at the beginning of his address, he was able "from the elevated position which I occupied on the platform . . . to lay bets with myself as to which religious order would finish first." If not as vividly, one has experienced the same.

The examples could be multiplied—the informality of Congress and the courts was remarked from the beginning—but it must be realized that most of the visitors, although they found the informality disconcerting at first, did not therefore find it repelling. Most of them would have agreed with the anonymous English writer in the *Contemporary Review* in 1872, who said, "Society in America is altogether easier than ours, simpler, more elastic, more variable, more gay and sparking, more tolerant (in spite of De Tocqueville's reflections on democratic uniformity) of individual divergences from the common type."

My own experience in the past ten years has persuaded me that this informality of American life is still striking, and that it is the context in

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which almost every other aspect of American society needs to be noticed: that it alters our conceptions of equality and liberty, of conformity and individuality. Moreover, its significance may best be understood by recognizing the way in which the manners of American life have crossed the Atlantic to change the manners of England and Europe. Nothing is more revealing in the evidence of the English observers, through the years, than the way in which many of the habits that were, at different times, regarded as strange and new in American life later became characteristics of English and European life.

For example, the accounts of the earlier travelers were full of complaints that the Americans devoured their meals with "no intervals of repose in mastication," and that "each individual seemed to *pitchfork* his food down his gullet" (Thomas Hamilton, 1833); that at a meal, even before an Englishman had "half finished my first cup of coffee, the tables were cleared and I was left alone, like the last rose of summer" (Thomas Cather, 1836); that a meal to Americans was "an important piece of work steadily carried through, and once it is finished there is no loitering" (anonymous, *Contemporary Review*, 1882); and that "the tendency of Americans [is] to regard mealtimes not as a period of relaxation but as an extension of office hours" (Lord Halifax, circa 1942). None of these observations should be dismissed as snooty: the representatives of one set of folkways were simply commenting on those who represented another set.

But watch how these observations change as the already partly Americanized traveler from England begins to discover that there are conveniences in American habits which he would welcome at home. In 1921, Clare Sheridan was taken by Upton Sinclair to a cafeteria in Los Angeles. "Never before," she exclaimed, "had I been to a cafeteria," and her description was wide-eyed:

> I followed him, and did what he did, and tried to look as if I knew what to do; he first took a metal tray from a column of metal trays, and passed along a row or buffet of hot dishes, selecting what he liked, and the serving woman behind the buffet placed a ration of his selection on his tray. Carrying our own trayfuls we retired to a little table.

She might have been describing the eating rituals of a remote tribe in the South Seas. But the passage, apparently so innocent, needs to be read with care. The tray was "metal"; there were so many other trays like it that there was a "column" of them; she was not led, and did not walk, to a table, but "passed along a row"; the person who helped was a "serving woman"; what one received was a "ration"; one carried one's own

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"trayful"; and went to a table that was "little." The language is honest and revealing: an attempt to describe a democratic habit in an undemocratic vocabulary—hence the excitement and archness at what was unfamiliar to her.

A year later, Arthur Conan Doyle was just as excited at his own discovery of the same ritual: ". . . a really splendid arrangement, by which you pick up what you want, carry it off on a small tray, and have no waiting whatsoever. This is so entirely simple and satisfactory that I think it is destined to have a very general use." Ten years later still, S. P. B. Mais said that the cafeteria was one of the "many things we could with advantage copy from this enlightened country"; and nine years later again, Sir Philip Gibbs was describing with just as much enthusiasm the ritual of the coffee shop. Gone are the complaints against the hurry with which Americans eat; in their place, praise for the fact that there is no waiting. It took "only thirty seconds," said Mais in 1933!

What matters in these exclamations is not only the eager discoveries of amenities in American life that ought to be imitated in England (as of course they have been), but the clear indication that the English traveler in his own manner of life—the pace of it, and increasingly its informality—was already becoming "American."

It was the evidence of a democratic society—the fact that in the cafeteria everyone received his "ration" in the same way—which above all was recognized in the informality. In 1872, an English writer, H. R. Haweis, who was not altogether sympathetic to the American experiment but understood its significance, summarized the changes in social relationships that were taking place:

> The fact is that with all its extravagances, its experiments, and its "high-falutin' " failures, America is steadily pointing to the future in social matters. If we want to know what Europe will be socially in fifty years, we must look at what America is becoming. Many will say, God forbid! And yet this demoralisation, nay, the social disorganisation at present rife in American society—especially the wild views prevalent about the freedom of women and the relations of the sexes—may be, nay, we believe, are, pointing vaguely but persistently in the direction of certain reforms and readjustments of social and moral law, which are needed. . . . At this time those who, in looking at America, see farthest, see in its social and political convulsions not only order coming for itself, but order coming for the whole civilised world.

More than a hundred years ago, and yet how contemporary it sounds! ". . . this demoralisation . . . the social disorganisation . . . the wild views prevalent about the freedom of women": it might have been written in the last ten years.

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The persistence of the theme of women in itself tells us something—as if this were an idea in America that, even across two centuries, never ceases to agitate. From the very beginning, English travelers have noticed that the American woman is not the same as other women: that she is freer in her manners and that she is freer because she is more equal. As early as 1765, Lord Adam Gordon noticed that the women at a ball in Boston were exceptionally beautiful, and "perhaps one reason is that every Girl who has a pretty face and good Clothes, is free to come, and is well received at Publick places there, where there is no distinction of persons." Beauty that was not highborn was welcome among the highborn.

In a letter to John Foster from Boston, on January 29, 1842, Dickens noticed that women "walk about at all seasons, wholly unprotected." Thackeray was entranced. From New York, he wrote Mrs. Carmichael-Smith on January 21, 1853: "I have been actually in love for 3 days with a pretty wild girl of 19 (and was never more delighted in my life than by discovering that I could have this malady over again)." On April 5 in the same year, he wrote from Philadelphia to Mrs. Brockfield: "There was a young quakeress at the lecture last night, listening about Fielding. Lord, lord, how pretty she was. There are hundreds of such everywhere, airy looking things. . . ." Prepared to lose his heart for three days—three weeks—three months—surely what matters most in these letters is his response to a kind of woman with whom, in London, he did not normally come in contact.

Richard Cobden might write sternly in 1859: "But the women appear to me to take the courtesies and privileges accorded to them too much as a right, & the manner in which they look for such concessions & attentions as are here yielded to them gives them a confident bearing which distracts from the air of timidity and feebleness which constitutes their title to the generosity of the rougher sex." But an anonymous writer in *Cornhill* in 1872 noticed: "The same idea that a girl does not need the sort of protection which custom insists in putting her under in Europe, makes it possible for her to move about more freely than she can well do here. . . . To be an isolated woman is a much less formidable thing there than in the old countries."

Even Rudyard Kipling found that "the girls of America are above and beyond them all. . . . They possess, moreover, a life among themselves, independent of masculine associations. They are self-possessed without parting with any tenderness that is their sex-right; they understand; they can take care of themselves; they are superbly independent." And sixty years later, in 1951, Christopher Salmon wrote that in America

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it is "the women who have sought and seek maturity and mutual improvement in each other's company. Their corporate intentions, their communal activity, their political, intellectual and philanthropic leagues have no parallel in the world." What matters in all these comments is not what anyone thinks is the character of the American woman—that is another subject—but that her character has consistently been seen as different from that of European women.

The same sort of observations can be traced in the attitudes of the English travelers to American children. "American children, as a rule," said Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke in 1868, "are 'forward,' ill-mannered, and immoral . . . even in the most old-fashioned of American states, the children are too full of self-assurance." Lady Verney in 1884 regarded them as "the *enfants terribles* which fill there so large a part in society. They do, say, *and eat*, everything they please." To L. P. Jacks in 1933 they were the "limbs of Satan." And I must confess that a generation later, in 1965, one of my first contributions to the *New York Times Magazine* was an expression of my consternation at these members of my species who froze me into a speechless alarm.

But this is exactly the point where one must not just pick out the plums of criticism. In 1942, Sir Philip Gibbs defended the American educational system, because "they are teaching better manners in the United States, and we have not caught up with them as a democracy, which is a comradeship of people without a sense of social inferiority. In the American mind that is instinctive." A year later, J. H. Mallon similarly noticed "the rhythm of cheerfulness and camaraderie that runs through American life. They invite friendship. They make visitors at home. . . . One meets everywhere these attractive products of the high school and the social atmosphere of America." At the core of this response was a recognition of the influence of coeducation.

In an editorial of May 2, 1908, the *Spectator* in England might criticize coeducation: ". . . the boys become 'an inferior copy of the girls,' acquiring a girl's gentleness and sensitiveness, but not the proper strength of either sex. Eventually the boys are 'irreparably wounded in their dignity,' and lose faith in themselves." But even Richard Cobden, as early as 1835, had praised coeducation. An anonymous writer in *Cornhill* in 1872 had said, "The first point in which the difference from England strikes a stranger is the liberty allowed to girls and young men going about together. . . . All this arises from, or at least is made much more natural by, the freedom with which young people associate together at school." And in 1898 Charles Philips Trevelyan, who noticed at Grinnell College that "you often see a man and a girl walking away from

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a lecture together, or bicycling together," burst into a rhapsody in a letter to his family on May 7, 1898, which I quote in full:

> [At the college sports] I have just spent one of pleasantest days of my life, *and all as a result of co-education* [my italics]. . . . I went up to the Senior stand and spent most of the afternoon there. I never saw a lot of girls enjoying themselves so much, singing their shouts, partisan songs, waving their orange scarfs, cheering and talking. There were a good lot of men there on perfectly easy terms. . . . But there was no sign of flirting of a silly sort. . . . During the afternoon a deputation from the sophomores, third year [*sic*], came to ask me if I would join a "bum" that evening. . . . About eight o'clock two big hay waggons went round picking up the sophomores, and one or two professors and myself. We all lay down in the hay or sat on the sides of the waggon and started at a sedate walking pace, jerking and jolting over the rutty roads, by the light of the stars. We drove in this way for about an hour, singing songs and talking, the girls' clear pure cries and singing making glad the heart. Then we piled a wood fire and put a hot coffee pot on it, as soon as we had a good blaze, to get up to boiling point. Meanwhile we danced a Virginia reel. . . . Then we drank a cup of coffee and eat [*sic*] a sandwich. . . . Then we made our way home again in the waggons by the light of the risen moon, singing solos and choruses, national songs, nigger songs, and hymns. I never was with such a healthy glad-hearted crowd before.

It is of course a delightful picture of an age in rural America that is lost; but it is much more than that, a response to a society in which the informality and freedom—in this case, "all as the result of co-education"—gave a visitor from one of the most notable families of England a feeling of release that he had not felt before.

It is still possible for an English visitor to feel this release. I have recently written in *Encounter*, in a transatlantic letter to my countrymen, that I was asked one evening in Houston the question Americans often ask me: why I *like* living in the United States. I gave the answer, surprising at first, "It is the first time in my life I have felt free." I have English colleagues and friends who understand that reply; and even after ten years in the country, I can still often find myself, among people of different classes and upbringings, ages and sexes, enjoying a variety and freedom of association that is still not, in spite of all the traveling of American manners to England and Europe, so easily and refreshingly to be enjoyed in my own country.

There is a quality in American society on which the English traveler has always fixed (better perhaps than de Tocqueville?) which lies behind the apparently weightier debates about equality and liberty, individuality and conformity. The true mark of American society is an informality that itself forms its own patterns and codes. Although the outsider at

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first cannot detect it, there is a rhythm to American life. This rhythm is a constant improvisation, a flexibility that will accommodate the wishes and whims of every member of a group. No one voice in an American family automatically takes precedence over the rest. Someone is always leaving or coming back; someone is always asking if he or she can have the car; someone is always going to the refrigerator for a snack instead of waiting for a meal; someone is always arriving late at a meal or leaving it early. The rhythm of the American family is to be found in a system of communications by which the improvised activities of each of its members are made known to all of them, so these can be taken into account. What holds the home together is a ceaseless flow of messages carried from each to all, and an accommodation is made to them.

The great debate about the measure of equality and liberty, of individuality and conformity, in the American democracy—and therefore of their possible measure in other democracies—has too often been carried on in terms of high abstractions. Thus it has sometimes seemed as if no one ever thought of looking in the simplest way at the day-to-day lives and manners of ordinary people—although it is for them that American society exists, first and last, avowedly and primarily. To this the observations of the English traveler—going beyond the "classics" to which most attention is usually paid—are a correction; and although I have quoted only a fraction of those I have collected, they are representative. One must again and again return to the image of Cyril Connolly, because all sense of European structure vanishes, not only in the landscape, but in the whole intricately improvised system of personal and social relationships, which is yet made to cohere. American society is a kaleidoscope; but however the pattern may be rearranged, in ways that the European does not from day to day understand, there is never *no* pattern.

Although there is much more to be said—and it should not be thought that I have more than touched on the themes in which the travelers have been interested—I will end with one that may be surprising to the American reader, but in fact is implicit in all that has so far been said and is even a summary of it. From the beginning, nothing is more remarkable in the literature than the almost consistent chorus of praise for the politeness of the Americans: their friendliness, hospitality, generosity, benevolence, bonhomie. Dickens, before he lost his temper, wrote to John Foster on January 29, 1842, "the general breeding is neither stiff nor formal; the good nature, universal." Thackeray was, as usual, alive with delight, writing to Albany Fonblanque on March 4, 1853, "There's a beautiful affection in this country, immense tenderness,

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romantic personal affection, and a general kindness and serviceableness and good nature wh is very pleasant and curious to witness for us folks at home who are mostly ashamed of our emotions"; and two years later he confessed to "a choky sort of feeling of gratitude" for their tenderness.

"I will go further and say," wrote H. Rider Haggard in 1891, "that nobody is so nice or sympathetic or broad-minded or desirous of all good as a really first-class American, man or woman." In 1920, H. W. Nevinson said that "there rules a politeness and open-hearted courtesy such as I have nowhere known equally. . . . I think the chief origin of the civility is the 'public school' open to all classes, and the education of boys and girls together." A year later, Lord Charnwood found in America "a courteous people, and a kindly people; a really democratic people which, on the whole, is definitely deciding that democracy, instead of meaning that nobody should be a lady or gentleman, shall mean that everybody should be so." In 1922, G. K. Chesterton said he had "always found Americans the politest people in the world." Five years later, Sir Osbert Sitwell was persuaded that "nowhere else will people, out of simplicity and kindness, take so much trouble." J. B. Priestley in 1929 said he must "freely acknowledge my sense of American kindness and generosity, which seem to proceed from a downright goodness of heart . . . they have made me feel ashamed of myself and my countrymen." In 1941, the historian C. K. Webster echoed, "The Americans are the friendliest people in the world." And T. H. White, who, like Thackeray, threw his hat in the air at almost all he saw in America, wrote in his journal on September 30, 1963, "One thing which is no myth is the general benevolence and drive towards goodness of the American."

It all sounds too much, doesn't it? Yet the evidence cannot be denied, and from my own experience I could echo it. It is too easy for Americans to say that it is a good nature shown only to outsiders. For one thing, the English traveler has met other foreigners, and not thought of praising *their* warmth and friendliness; but even more important, one can observe the same courtesies and thoughtfulness being shown by Americans to one another. The character of this good nature is hard to put one's finger on. Perhaps it is motiveless, springing from the kindness and simplicity of heart to which so many of the English travelers have made reference. But its true quality surely lies in the acceptance of anyone just for what he is; and a place will be found for one just as one is. The openness in it is the assurance that it is no trouble, that one is not upsetting any previous arrangements for the day or the evening, that it just means "fixing another place," that one is not disturbing any hierarchy of seating, that one is not even intruding on the family. In America

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the family is thrown open to admit the visitor; in England it tends to draw itself tightly into a circle to keep him apart and at a distance.

Then there is the civility and even the friendliness of many of those who give service. The girl at the checkout counter and the attendant at the gas station are, generally speaking, helpful and good-natured and cheerful, whereas in England they tend to be deferential and untalkative and sulky. There can be no doubt that this has much to do with the essential classlessness of the American society—with the feeling that one is still equal whatever one may be doing, with the social effects of the high school, and with the underlying sense that for each of them (although they may not all realize it) there is a way out, that they are not a *class* of servants. Of course one meets individual acts of discourtesy, but this general impression is never upset for long.

Finally, much of the pleasantness of American society is attributable to the nature and position of American women. Some of the English observers whom I quoted above commented on the fact that American women have their own ways of associating among themselves. The fact is, women in America are better friends with one another than women are in England. Nothing struck me more forcibly during my early visits to the United States than the openness and the strength of women's friendships with each other. The number of women whom one could see lunching together was a surprise to me, and so striking that it remains a surprise. But the strength of their own friendships also makes them able to be better friends of men, and this is a beneficent influence on the society.

In the past ten years, we have heard much of the ill-temper and violence, the alienation and surliness of the American people at this moment. (In passing, it is interesting that the idea that the Americans are a violent people hardly occurs, if at all, in the travelers' observations.) For a generation the American people have been subjected to many strains and any characteristic of American life in the past can certainly be lost if the Americans themselves do not choose to cherish it. One way to lose it is to cease to believe in its existence, and to an outsider the generous and open spirit of American society and of its people is as evident now as ever. The democratic informality of manners amounts to a democratic *noblesse oblige;* and only when this is recognized, and its persistence for two centuries acknowledged, may the more abstract issues of equality and liberty be properly faced.

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Dichtung und Wahrheit

(For Cyrus Hoy)

ANTHONY HECHT

I

The Discus Thrower's marble heave,
  Captured in mid-career,
That polished poise, that Parian arm
  Sleeved only in the air,
Vesalian musculature, white
  As the mid-winter moon—
This, and the clumsy snapshot of
  An infantry platoon,
Those grubby and indifferent men,
  Lounging in bivouac,
Their rifles aimless in their laps,
  Stop history in its tracks.

We who are all aswim in time,
  We, "the inconstant ones,"
How can such fixture speak to us?
  The chisel and the lens
Deal in a taxidermy
  Of our arrested flights,
And by their brute translation we
  Turn into Benthamites.
Those soldiers, like some senior class,
  Were they prepared to dye
In silver nitrate images
  Behind the camera's eye?

It needs a Faust to animate
  The wan homunculus,

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Construe the stark, unchanging text,
  Winkle the likes of us
Out of a bleak geology
  That art has put to rest,
And by a sacred discipline
  Give breath back to the past.
How, for example, shall I read
  The expression on my face
Among that company of men
  In that unlikely place?

II

Easy enough to claim, in the dáwn of hindsight,
That Mozart's music perfectly enacts
Pastries and powdered wigs, an architecture
Of white and gold rosettes, balanced parterres.
More difficult to know how the spirit learns
Its scales, or the exact dimensions of fear:
The nameless man dressed head-to-foot in black,
Come to commission a requiem in a hurry.
In the diatonic house there are many mansions:
A hunting lodge in the mountains, a peaceable cloister,
A first-class restaurant near the railroad yards,
But also a seedy alms-house, the granite prisons
And oubliettes of the soul. Just how such truth
Gets itself stated in pralltrillers and mordents
Not everyone can say. But the 'cellist,
Leaning over his labors, his eyes closed,
Is engaged in that study, blocking out, for the moment,
Audience, hall, and a great part of himself
In what, not wrongly, might be called research,
Or the most private kind of honesty.

We begin with the supreme donnée, the world,
Upon which every text is commentary,
And yet they play each other, the oak leaf cured
In sodden ditches of autumn darkly confirms

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Our words; and by the frailest trifles
(A doubt, a whisper, and a handkerchief)
Venetian pearl and onyx are cast away.
It is, in the end, the solitary scholar
Who returns us to the freshness of the text,
Which returns to us the freshness of the world
In which we find ourselves, like replicas,
Dazzled by glittering dawns, upon a stage.
Pentelic balconies give on the east;
The clouds are scrolled, bellied in apricot,
Adrift in pools of Scandinavian blue.
Light crisps the terraces of dolomite.
Enter The Prologue, who at once declares,
"We begin with the supreme donnée, the word."

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Many Tocquevilles

ROBERT NISBET

MY INTEREST HERE IS, IN ALMOST EQUAL PARTS, Alexis de Tocqueville's classic, *Democracy in America*, and the American intellectual scene, chiefly as we have known it since about 1940. Although some of Tocqueville's major insights form the substance of what follows, I shall consider them, not directly, much less systematically, but instead through the prisms that have been formed by successive American reactions to *Democracy in America*. The relation of a book to its public is always a matter of interest, especially when that public is the protagonist of the book.

Few books have ever been greeted with larger or more immediate applause than Part I of *Democracy in America* when it was published in Paris in 1835, four years after Tocqueville's and Beaumont's visit of nine months to the United States. Overnight the author was declared a major thinker, perhaps the foremost political philosopher since Montesquieu. There were scores of admiring reviews. When Part II appeared five years later, the applause was diminished, but Tocqueville's stature was unaffected. For three decades he remained lustrous as a political philosopher on both sides of the Atlantic. In France the book went through thirteen editions in the fifteen years following publication, and it did fully as well in the United States, where, early on, it was used in adapted form as a textbook in the public schools. The story was the same in England. John Stuart Mill described it as the best philosophical work ever written on democracy, and it was evidently regarded in this light not only by the reading public but by scholars and statesmen. In Germany, Dilthey, in later tribute, ranked Tocqueville among the first three minds of his age in Europe, calling him "the greatest analyst of the political world since Machiavelli and Aristotle." So it went.

Then the book fell upon hard times. From being widely read and quoted, by the 1870s it had become a text only occasionally studied and footnoted. In England, Dicey lamented that he could not interest stu-

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dents in a work that had been virtually the staple of his and his contemporaries' education. There were still, of course, occasional tributes: Bryce's, in his 1888 classic, *The American Commonwealth;* Woodrow Wilson's, H. B. Adams's, and a few others; but that was all. In this country just after the turn of the century, the book went out of print and, it is no injustice to add, out of mind. In France, Antoine Redier did publish, in 1925, the first detailed, thorough biography of Tocqueville, which bore the somewhat ironic title *Comme Disait M. de Tocqueville.* It received little notice, so far as I can tell, except among historians of the French Revolution, who had been continuously influenced by his 1854 *Old Regime and the French Revolution.*

In short, from the late 1860s until the late 1930s only an occasional monograph or article on Tocqueville appeared—nothing, really, that lifted him from the ranks of literally dozens of other French writers of the early nineteenth century. As a personal note I can attest that in the 1930s, during seven years of a better-than-average education, undergraduate and graduate, at Berkeley, I did not once hear the name Tocqueville in class or seminar. Others of my generation have assured me that my experience was not unique.

Nevertheless it was in the 1930s that matters began to change. The hundredth anniversary of Part I of *Democracy in America* produced a few notices, although I myself was unaware of them. More important, seeds planted then or earlier produced their yield during the next four or five years. George Pierson's fascinating *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America* appeared in 1938, though chiefly of interest to students of American history. In 1939 J. P. Mayer—preeminent Tocqueville scholar of our age—published his *Tocqueville: Prophet of the Mass Age.* There were a few other studies, all brief, in the late 1930s, among them two perceptive essays by Albert Salomon of the New School for Social Research. I recall coming upon a brief, penetrating reference to Tocqueville in one of Diana Trilling's earliest essays, around 1940.

Then came the deluge, slightly postponed by the impact of World War II. In 1945 Alfred A. Knopf, in one of his many services to American literacy, brought out the first new edition—the first reprinting indeed—of *Democracy in America,* with a splendid introduction by Phillips Bradley, then of Queens College, New York. The book caught on almost immediately, and by the late 1940s it was a rare month that did not yield treatments of, or references to, Tocqueville in the little magazines, the scholarly quarterlies, and a rising number of books. Tocqueville's name began slowly to rival Marx's in literary and scholarly circles. This recovered eminence is by now three decades old, and it shows no present sign of changing.

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II

How do we account for the rise, then the fall, and then the rise again of Tocqueville as an imposing prophet and analyst of democracy? What made *Democracy in America* popular during the three decades or so that followed its publication? What brought about the book's decline, in both intellectual and popular regard, by 1880? And what, finally, restored it to the extraordinary importance it has had since about 1940? Any answers to these questions will obviously say as much about the changing character of the American mind as about the book itself.

I take nothing from Tocqueville's well-recorded singleness of purpose and design when I say the book in its entirety is a composite—one of extraordinarily diverse perceptions, reflections, and, far from least, moods. Ostensibly rooted in the visit to America, the book is in fact a collection of ideal types generated in Tocqueville's mind by the tension he clearly and acknowledgedly experienced under the impact of the revolution in Europe that had begun in 1789 and, in his judgment, had never ended, only grown wider and deeper. Himself the child of aristocratic parents who had been jailed for months during the Terror under the daily expectation of execution, himself unalterably noble of manner as well as birth, Tocqueville was yet unable to join those who sought to arrest or reverse democratic currents. Neither, however, could he bring himself to accept the implications of that revolution of values which he saw as a providential fact and which he refused to combat.

In a letter to his friend and translator, Henry Reeve, Tocqueville wrote in 1837: "People ascribe to me alternately aristocratic and democratic prejudices. If I had been born in another period, or in another country, I might have had either one or the other. But my birth, as it happened, made it easy for me to guard against both. I came into the world at the end of a long revolution, which, after destroying ancient institutions, created none that could last. When I entered life, aristocracy was dead and democracy was yet unborn. My instinct, therefore, could not lead me blindly either to the one or the other."

But if this division of mind is always present in Tocqueville's work, it quite evidently manifests itself in varying proportions and intensities. To the degree that the book is in fact about America, the spirit of optimism and affection for democracy is alive, with only occasional exceptions. But, as is well known to all Tocqueville readers, and has been known since Part II was published in 1840, the book is only partly about America, and, as a work of descriptive ethnography, somewhat deficient. What the book most largely is devoted to is, by Tocqueville's own admission, "the image of democracy" and "what we have to fear or to

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hope from its progress." Paul Janet, who admired Tocqueville, wrote in 1840: "It is certain . . . that the problem that disturbed M. de Tocqueville and that brought him to the United States is the problem of European democracy. It is this very fact that gives the book its grandeur, I might also say its emotional quality, but which at the same time introduces a certain obscurity. Tocqueville describes America, but he thinks of Europe; hence those contradictory observations that cannot be applied at the same time to both."

Yet this very mixture—indeed confusion—of what, on the one hand, are direct observations drawn from the notebooks Tocqueville so assiduously kept while on his journey with Beaumont through America, and, on the other hand, intuitions, abstract reflections, and ideal types, has in no small degree kept *Democracy in America* an iridescent classic. It is not so much a book of prophecy, as it is often termed, as a book of many and diverse images to which time and circumstance lend mutability and variant evocation.

Which leads us to the signal difference between Part I and Part II. There are many ways of describing this difference, but certainly not the least among them is the difference in mood. In Part I the mood is, for the most part, buoyant, high-spirited, even optimistic. I do not say that the opposite of these qualities is altogether lacking. There are the ruminations on majority rule, on the power of public opinion, on the dangerous relation between whites and blacks. But overwhelmingly the mood of Part I is in celebration of American institutions, of local government, the judiciary, voluntary association, the ethic of work, legal pluralism, and the like.

We need only turn to the final chapter of Part I, titled "Future Prospects of the United States," to see how overriding are Tocqueville's optimism and admiration. Here America is pronounced a nation of the freest and the happiest people on earth, destined, he tells us (this in 1835!), to become the preeminent commercial nation of the world and, with this, the first naval power. Its expanse would, well before the end of the century, reach the Pacific. Its population would number more than one hundred and fifty million within a century. And, in a passage that has become celebrated, he prophesies that the future of the world will belong to two great nations, Russia and the United States. His words in this prophecy are worth reciting: "All other nations seem to have nearly reached their natural limits, and they have only to maintain their power; but these two are still in act of growth. . . . The American struggles against the obstacles which nature opposes to him; the adversaries of the Russian are men. The former combats the wilderness and savage life; the latter, civilization with all its arms. . . . The Anglo-American relies upon

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personal interest to accomplish ends, and gives free scope to the unguided strength and common sense of the people; the Russian centers all authority of society in a single arm. The principal interest of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude. Their starting-point is different, and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe."

That this appreciation of American institutions lay deep in Tocqueville's mind is attested to by the preface he wrote to the twelfth French edition, a full thirteen years after initial publication. At that time he was tormented by the events of 1848 in France, events in which he played a major political role as elected deputy and as member of the Constitutional Commission. In the preface he declares flatly that all republics worthy of the name must be based upon American constitutional principles. To the end of his life, Tocqueville was best known as celebrant of American liberal democracy. Indeed, conservatives such as Frédéric Le Play criticized him precisely on this ground.

Needless to say, this mood of celebration of American institutions in Part I caught on in the United States after a slight hesitation by Americans, who were only too used to unflattering commentary by European visitors. This is the Tocqueville who for nearly three decades was a widely admired, widely read author in the United States. Rare was the article, book, or newspaper editorial on American political institutions written by an American that did not invoke the name of M. de Tocqueville. Substantial sections of *Democracy in America* were used in American schools.

We come now to the Fall. As Tocqueville had risen to eminence on both sides of the Atlantic by virtue of his celebration of American political progress, so now would he suffer decline (though not until after his death in 1859) from this selfsame celebration. If the cause of decline was the same on both sides of the Atlantic, the nature of the process was different. In Europe—where a kind of malaise had fallen upon those circles in which Tocqueville the philosopher of democracy had first won renown, where skepticism of progress and democracy was burgeoning—Tocqueville, identified as he was with both values, disappeared among the shades. True, the skeptics could have found rich food in Part II of *Democracy in America* had they looked, but they did not look, or if they looked they did not see.

Quite different is the story in the United States. Here, with rarest of exceptions, the spirit of progress remained ascendant at least down through World War I. In no other country in the world was the idea of progress so deeply, religiously held. There were few then who doubted American destiny. Ironically, it was this very intoxication with American

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progress, I believe, that led to Tocqueville's decline. Granted that he had helped generate it in the first place, it had now outreached him. He had praised American progress—but not recently! His place was taken by dozens, then hundreds, of Americans able themselves to praise the spirit from which all blessings flowed. Tocqueville's 1835 ode to American progress was now lost in the vast chorus that stretched from one ocean to the other.

III

If Tocqueville had sunk by his buoyancy, so to speak, he might now be said to have risen by his gravity—the sometimes foreboding gravity that exists only in patches of Part I but is the very warp of Part II of *Democracy in America*. By the 1940s it was not the progress of democracy and of equalitarianism that was most resplendent, either in Tocqueville's book or in the American intellectual mind, but, rather, what might be called the inversion of progress. We found ourselves beginning to suffer doubts concerning the very values of modernity we had for so long revered: the voice of the people, secularism, technology, political rationalism, and others. And this is, of course, the very character of Part II, with only the rarest relief—and indeed, as we were now beginning to see, even of Part I in a few places. As a boy Tocqueville had written in his daybook that the three greatest afflictions from which mankind suffers are disease, death, and doubt—in that order.

Doubt was the prevailing tone of the Tocqueville being read in the late 1930s and the 1940s. Who has failed to note the specters that hang over Part II—of moral decay caused from within, of erosion of community and authority, of collapsed honor, of spiritual restlessness unassuaged by the quest for material prosperity, of technology that diminishes the artisan even as it advances the art, and, most ominous, of the distinctive kind of despotism that democracy alone has the power of creating?

Yet what were the crucial circumstances surrounding Tocqueville's return to eminence by 1940? Not, certainly, those of the Great Depression. I have no recollection of any use of *Democracy in America* by those in this country—and their number was large—addressing themselves to the evils or insufficiencies of capitalism. In a way this is strange, given the fact of Tocqueville's revival. For well before Karl Marx had set down his animadversions to bourgeois commercialism, Tocqueville, chiefly in Part II, had offered some strikingly critical, even pessimistic, views on the economic institutions of democracy.

Commercialism, he tells us (and this was written, it has to be remem-

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bered, in the late 1830s, a full decade before the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels appeared), by its very nature must succumb to regular and increasingly devastating panics or crises. Further, although wages have tended to rise in the democracies, the increasing monopolization of capital is bound to depress this tendency. Conflict between "the aristocracy of manufacturers"—which Tocqueville calls the harshest in history—and the working class is unalterable and will only grow worse. Division of labor, so widely hailed by the friends of industrialism, makes the worker a mere victim; "the art advances, the artisan recedes." And in dour reference to Adam Smith's famous example, Tocqueville asks, "What can be expected of a man who has spent twenty years of his life making heads for pins?"

Nor is this all. Democratic passion for incessant buying and selling as the way to quick riches not only prevents a genuine landed or rural class from coming into existence in the United States, but the condition is set for what can only be a built-in tendency toward inflation. Finally—and here Tocqueville's eye is as much on Europe as the United States—there is the destructive power of money over both moral values and social stability. What the erosion of traditional social classes has brought about is not any genuine equality of actual circumstances, but only the ascendancy of the wealthy. "I know of no country," he writes of the United States, "where the love of money has taken stronger hold on the affections of men and where a profounder contempt is expressed for the theory of the permanent equality of property."

These, then, are Tocqueville's views of what would later come to be known as the capitalist system. Had we made our way to them in this country in the 1930s, we should, obviously, have found much to support our indictments of capitalism. But we did not. And in any event, the commanding presence of Marx would have prevented our assimilating Tocqueville the economist. Marx, after all, conveyed intellectual certainty in religious intensity and was moreover identified with the Church of the Soviet Union. It is in a way a high tribute to Tocqueville that at no time has there been, or is there likely to be, anything called Tocqueville*ism*. We must, in sum, look elsewhere for the crucial contexts in which Tocqueville's rebirth occurred.

Oddly, the first of the contexts in which American intellectuals found their way to Tocqueville was European rather than American, political rather than economic: a fact of both biographical and historical importance. As I observed above, one of the most common criticisms of Part II when it appeared in 1840 was that although Tocqueville professed to be writing about the United States, his eye was actually on Europe and the patterns of emerging power and affluence to be seen there. It was the

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France of Balzac rather than the America of Emerson that Tocqueville was most deeply interested in.

Now, in the late 1930s, with the riveting of American intellectual attention on European totalitarianism, especially Nazism, as this new form of despotism was being interpreted to us by European philosophers and scholars in exile in this country, a seedbed came into existence in which Tocquevillian ideas could take root. Through transplanted Europeans, American intellectuals were being made aware of what Emil Lederer—in a book published in 1940, exactly a century after Part II of *Democracy in America*—called "the state of the masses," following Ortega y Gasset's earlier "revolt of the masses." And this, of course, is exactly what Tocqueville had been writing about: the masses as the source of despotism; the absence, rather than the presence, of social class as the crucial factor in the rise of centralized, omnicompetent political power.

I don't find much evidence that the problem of political power (of centralization rooted in bureaucracy), in spreading social homogeneity and loss of cultural diversity, had ever really interested American intellectuals before the 1930s. Economic power, yes; the kind of power that went with big business, the trusts, the monopolies, what T.R. had called "malefactors of great wealth," and F.D.R. was calling "economic royalists." But not the kind of power, we were only later to discover, that Nietzsche, Burckhardt, Taine, and Max Weber had written about. Not the kind of power Tocqueville, even earlier, had foreseen and described in a famous passage in Part II that I quote from only briefly, since it is well known by now:

> . . . that power is absolute, minute, regular, provident, and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent if, like that authority, its object was to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks, on the contrary, to keep them in perpetual childhood. . . . Thus it every day renders the exercise of the free agency of man less useful and less frequent; it circumscribes the will within a narrower range and gradually robs a man of all the uses of himself. The principle of equality has prepared men for these things; it has predisposed men to endure them and often to look on them as benefits. . . . Such a power does not destroy but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals of which the government is the shepherd.

Those, as is evident enough today, are words of prophecy as well as analysis. I am not likely myself to forget soon the thrill of their discovery when I first read *Democracy in America* in 1939. Of a sudden, a great deal about modern Western history and society took on new meaning for

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me. I found myself for the first time seeing social democracy, including the New Deal (of which I had been a fairly ardent admirer) in a different light. What was occurring in the Soviet Union, in Hitler's Germany, became freshly illuminated for me and also, as later became evident, for others as well. That absolute power could go with social humanitarianism, could be rooted in the mass rather than an upper class, could be given extension and penetration by the very political agencies that had been created in the name of the people to cope with their problems; that totalitarianism could be understood best, not as reversion to a dark past, but as a product, however corrupt, of democratic modernity—all this was new to American thinkers and, as I recall well, not immediately accepted.

It is important to stress that such insights did not really explain the actual rise of the Lenins, Stalins, and Hitlers. We could have learned more from Tocqueville about this in certain passages from his notable study of the French Revolution and from the notes he left behind (only later to be published) on Napoleon and the peculiar character of his dictatorship. There, rather more than in *Democracy in America*, we could have acquired prescient understanding of the use of terror, capture of democratic assemblies, flattery of the masses, and military might fused with large-scale governmental paternalism that were the vital elements in the Communist, Fascist, and Nazi despotisms.

Nevertheless, the vision of power I have just cited from *Democracy in America*, with its emphasis upon the network of bureaucracy and administrative penetration by government of the smallest recesses of human life, had a good deal of relevance to the new totalitarianisms. Quite apart from the crucial circumstances of their birth, these governments, once in existence, once in full command of their respective populations, did indeed seek, in Tocqueville's phrasing, to destroy all in society that was not of their own making: to compress, enervate, extinguish, and stupefy; to cover the surface of society with a network of small, complicated rules through which the most original minds could not penetrate.

Tocqueville's characterization of the distinctive kind of power that democracies of the future had most to fear, once it was widely read and grasped by intellectuals in this country in the 1940s, had a good deal to do with our belated discovery of the impact of bureaucracy upon society and individuals. I find it both interesting and illuminating that our rebirth of interest in Tocqueville coincided with our discovery of Max Weber and his systematic analysis of modern bureaucracy. No one has equaled Weber in his detailed grasp of the special kind of power that is lodged in bureaucracy, but a score of passages in *Democracy in America*

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attest to Tocqueville's earlier identification of this power and of its affinity with popular government. Totalitarianism to one side, democracy, as we have learned, can represent, through incessant development of administrative centralization, a very real form of despotism. And it was Tocqueville who first showed us the character of this despotism.

IV

So much for the first context of Tocqueville's reappearance in contemporary thought, which was, as I have suggested, overwhelmingly political. The second set of circumstances within which Tocqueville became important to American intellectuals is to be found in the realm of the economic—more precisely, in the unprecedented affluence that arrived in Western societies, especially the United States, after World War II. Here too *Democracy in America* proved to be a brilliant beacon. For without doubt, capitalist wealth had fascinated Tocqueville on his visit to the United States; and it never ceased to fascinate, and also to repel, him during the course of his political and scholarly life thereafter. This is a dimension of *Democracy in America* that has been too little appreciated: the characteristics—moral, social, psychological, and cultural—that go with not just democracy alone, but substantial middle-class wealth. Tocqueville, it is evident to the attentive reader, is the anatomist of affluence. In this respect he takes rank with his contemporary, Balzac.

It was in the 1940s that we ourselves were beginning to become anatomists of affluent society in the United States. Nothing comparable to the prosperity generated by World War II had ever existed in the United States, or for that matter in the West as a whole. We were scarcely prepared for it intellectually. The roots of most intellectuals were largely populist or socialist. In the 1930s intellectuals had become students of depression and its varied stigmata, and they knew the answer for depression: prosperity! Now, a decade later, they were beginning to ask, what is the answer to prosperity?

Gone overnight, it now seems, were the accustomed specters of unemployment, depression, and poverty that had haunted the thinking and writing of American intellectuals. There were new specters—of social and psychological, rather than economic, insecurity; of loss of identity; of community. There was a new rhetoric in the fifties, with such phrases as "the lonely crowd," "the quest for community," "the eclipse of community," and "organization man," all given intensity by preoccupation with the master word of the postwar intellectual mind: *alienation*. These were hardly pressing matters for American in-

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tellectuals back in the nineteen-twenties and thirties. "Crisis" then referred to the capitalist economy, not to one's personal identity or to the intimacies of community. But in the fifties, the only perturbations, the only tensions, strains, and agonies that really mattered were those which could be seen in, or inferred from, the human spirit and its ties with culture.

And thus a new Tocqueville began to appear in American intellectual journals from 1950 on. I don't say the Tocqueville of totalitarianism and bureaucracy disappeared; not by any means. But the great interest of *Democracy in America* throughout the 1950s was much less political than it was social and cultural. The book became in substantial measure our guide to a suddenly perceived alienation and anomie in the midst of postwar American middle-class affluence.

Interestingly, a new Marx made his appearance at this time: the previously unknown or ignored Marx of the Paris essays, the Marx of alienation, the existentialist, the humanist Marx, so different from the Marx we had read and been moved by in the decade of the thirties. Marx, even the Paris Marx, is hardly the anatomist of affluence, but the fact remains that for the first time a kind of dialogue became possible between Marx and Tocqueville: hence another reason for the American Left's rising interest in Tocqueville during the 1950s.

Tocqueville had discovered, or believed he had, universal economic prosperity among middle-class Americans, and also among the European middle classes in the emerging democracies. Characteristically, he set himself to reflection, long before Lord Keynes, upon the social, cultural, and spiritual consequences of taking economic prosperity for granted. What Tocqueville perceived continues to make interesting and often persuasive reading.

He saw permanent inflation built into democracy—not only economic, but linguistic, rhetorical, moral, and cultural inflation—as the result of the constantly escalating expectations that a combination of equality and materialistic hedonism creates. A whole way of life, he thought, was founded, or would be founded, on this revolution of rising expectations. He saw other consequences or epiphenomena of affluence: a general weakening of the social bond; a decline in the sense of the reality and importance of society; a turning inward to the privacy of, first family, then self; a spread of egoism that he termed the rust of individualism; and, far from least, a diminished confidence of the individual in himself, a growing sense of isolation and of impotence in almost direct proportion to the democratization of the social order and to the increase in middle-class economic substance.

Gratification of material desires, he noted, is made easier and is ever

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more coveted; but such gratification, far from adding to the sum of middle-class happiness, seems to work in the opposite direction: to induce restlessness, even disquiet and melancholy. Alternations between passivity and a spiritualized fanaticism are common. "In democratic times, enjoyments are more intense than in the ages of aristocracy, and the number of those who partake in them is vastly larger, but it must be admitted that man's hopes and desires are oftener blasted, the soul is more stricken and perturbed, and care itself more keen." On the one hand, Tocqueville found in America "a kind of virtuous materialism," one that will not "corrupt but enervate the soul and noiselessly unbend its springs of action." But side by side with this materialism, he saw "in the midst of American society . . . men full of a fanatical, almost wild spiritualism." He continues: "The soul has wants which must be satisfied; and whatever pains are taken to divert it from itself, it soon grows weary, restless, and disquieted amid the enjoyments of sense."

Such perceptions did not go unnoticed in the United States in the 1950s when the full effects of postwar prosperity were so widely present in intellectual consciousness. No wonder affluent middle-class youth especially found itself preoccupied on a widening scale with this Tocqueville, as he was introduced into more and more college courses across the land. Those already predisposed to see conflict between material prosperity and virtue could, and did, find ample support from Tocqueville. His long chapter in Part II on honor and its inexorable decline as the consequence of democratic and commercial forces is a classic in itself, and as prescient as anything else to be found in *Democracy in America.* That men in high places and low would flout the coercions of honor under the temptations of modern power and affluence is only too clearly set forth in this chapter. It is no wonder, then, that the book came to attract the interest of the Left as well as the Right in this country. I have not forgotten how vital *Democracy in America* seemed to students of the New Left as well as to the New Conservatives in my classes at Berkeley when I first began to assign the book regularly. For here was a degree of detail in the limning of corruption of moral values that was not to be found in Marx or even the anarchists.

Almost equally prized by American intellectuals in this same decade of the 1950s were Tocqueville's ruminations on the decline in intellectual and cultural values under democracy. The lesson here was, to be sure, harder to accept. We had, after all, been nurtured by Jefferson and his long line of philosophical descendants. That democracy induced degradation of culture was not easily assimilated by American intellectuals. But they were attentive nevertheless to Tocqueville's treatment, in Part II, of the literary, scientific, and artistic characteristics of

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democracy set in commercialism. Cultural standards and "forms" diminish or else retreat to ever more private places. In literature a "trading spirit" is introduced, and "for some few great authors . . . you may reckon thousands of idea-mongers." Art ranges from the insignificant and banal to the emptily monumental; little intermediate ground is occupied. Science is overwhelmingly practical or applied; its vital philosophical and theoretical roots are untended, unheeded. Everywhere is to be seen adoration of the multitude, on the one hand, and anxious preoccupation with the puniness of the individual, on the other. Democracy cultivates regard for the entirety of a people and enjoins self-regard upon the individual; but all intermediate forms of community, whether moral, aesthetic, or social, tend to atrophy and, with them, individual self-confidence.

I needn't dwell any longer on this Tocqueville—the anatomist of affluence, its pleasures and profits, its pains and alienations. He was as real an eminence in the 1950s as an earlier Tocqueville, prophet of totalitarianism, had been in the 1940s and a much earlier Tocqueville, herald of American progress, had been a century earlier. How long this third Tocqueville would have survived in American intellectual consciousness had other things been held in abeyance, we can only guess. But, as is now a matter of vivid memory, other things did not remain the same. The Supreme Court decision of 1954 massively and permanently altered the American social and political landscape, although the implications of this decision were several years in reaching American life and thought. Suffice it to say that *Brown v. Board of Education* gave impetus and, in time, focus to what will surely prove to be the transcending moral and political issue of the second half of the twentieth century: *equality*.

V

Now another Tocqueville emerged gradually on the scene, a Tocqueville very much with us as I write. And here, I suggest, though with due regard for the authenticity of the other Tocquevilles I have described, we have the essential, the constitutive Tocqueville. For equality is the master concept in Tocqueville's writings, all of them: equality in its relations with power, freedom, and other major values. As many a reader has been forced to conclude, *equality*, not *democracy* with its several, variable connotations, should have been made the title of Part II of Tocqueville's classic. Where the *majority* is the brooding presence of Part I, *equality* succeeds to this eminence in the second part of the work. Tocqueville was quite literally tormented by the idea of equality. Countless letters and notes as well as passages in his books attest to this. He was

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also both ambiguous and ambivalent in his treatment of equality, just as many of us are at this moment.

For, although never doubting the omnipresent and inexorable character of equality as historical tendency, he is yet prone to its analysis, and quite often in this analysis indecision is the essence. Thus, through equality more men have become able to read and also to write books, but the quality of the books has diminished and, with rare interruptions, will continue to diminish. Language, having become the property of all or most, suffers inflation, becomes increasingly a means, ranging from the orotund to the primitive, of hiding or blurring meanings. Public monuments become more numerous but less and less important. Through equality ancient barriers are broken down, but money, rather than rank, becomes dominant and subjects man's spirit to its own torments. With inherited rank decreasingly important, the opportunity for competition is opened, but such competition for status becomes in its own way as tyrannical as anything before it. For the essence of competition, Tocqueville stresses, when it is fused with democratic equality, is to demand incessant proofs and demonstrations of merit, through examinations of one kind or other, and the creative spirit grows weak or becomes alienated altogether by the prospect of being forced constantly to prove itself through signs available to all. It is a great thing, he quotes Pascal as saying, to be born a man of intellectual quality; it is a clear gain of at least twenty years. But of what use is this if one must be perennially ready to prove it through means or symbols of the public's own choice, through wearying hurdles over which everyone must jump? There is also the sense of weakness generated in the individual by observation of the sea of equality. "The citizen of a democracy comparing himself with others feels proud of his equality with each. But when he compares himself with all his fellows, and measures himself against this vast entity, he is overwhelmed by the sense of his insignificance and weakness." Hence the decline of great ambition and its replacement by countless minuscule aspirations. The spirit of competition, he writes, overtakes and soon destroys the great ambition in an egalitarian age. Society is at once monotonous and agitated; the danger or prospect of genuine revolution is diminished, but with this the prospect also of genuine intellectual and cultural change.

But by far the greatest of tensions in Tocqueville's mind is that relating to freedom and equality. Others, beginning with Aristotle and continuing through Edmund Burke, noted the potential conflict between the two values, but Tocqueville was the first to construct a whole social and political philosophy around it, and ambivalence is its essence. Thus, in one passage he can write: "Personally, far from finding fault with

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equality because it inspires a spirit of independence, I praise it primarily for that very reason. I admire it because it lodges in the very depths of each man's heart and mind that indefinable feeling, the instinctive inclination for political independence, and thus prepares the remedy for the ill it engenders. It is precisely for this reason that I cling to it."

Only a few paragraphs below, however, Tocqueville can write in different key. All centralizing minds, he tells us, are fond of equality, and all egalitarian minds are attracted to centralization. "The foremost or indeed the sole condition required in order to succeed in centralizing the supreme power in a democratic community is to love equality or to get men to believe you love it. Thus the science of despotism, which was once so complex, is simplified, and reduced, as it were, to a single principle." Repeatedly, centralization of power and equality are made the separate variables in a single parametric equation.

Nor is this, in Tocqueville, invariably set in a hostile view. In his generally gloomy assessment of the Negro-white future in the United States—an assessment that comes toward the end of Part I but is picked up again in Part II and in many letters—we find centralization, even in despotic degree, seen by Tocqueville as perhaps the only means whereby black and white perceptions of their inequality can become dissolved in common subjection to a political will that equalizes even as it tyrannizes. Tocqueville loathed not only the slavery he saw in the South, but also the whole racist perspective in historical or sociological interpretation, as his fascinating correspondence with Gobineau makes incontestably clear. But he did not underestimate the sheer power of the black-white relation upon the American mind. If in Europe, he writes, centuries have been required for the marks of servitude to be erased from the faces of those who are, after all, members of the same race with those who were once their masters, how much longer will be required where color is involved? It is to American abolitionists that Tocqueville addresses the following warning: "I am obliged to confess that I do not regard the abolition of slavery as a means of warding off the struggle of the two races in the Southern states. The Negroes may long remain slaves without complaining; but if they are once raised to the level of freemen they will soon revolt at being deprived of almost all their civil rights, and if they cannot become the equals of the whites they will speedily show themselves as enemies."

He was as struck by the black freedman as by the slave, and what he saw depressed him. He writes: "If I were called upon to predict the future, I should say that the abolition of slavery in the South will, generally, increase the repugnance of the White population for the Black. I base this upon analogous observations I have made in the North.

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I have remarked that the White inhabitants of the North avoid the Blacks with increasing care in proportion as the legal barriers of separation are removed by the legislature." And in a note to himself he observes that whereas in the South the whites do not care how close physically the blacks come to them so long as they do not seek to rise in the social scale, in the North they do not care how high the blacks rise so long as they do not come too close.

Tocqueville's relevance to the present, and indeed possibly to the rest of this century, may very well be greater than it has been in any of his previous images in the American mind. For equality is, as Tocqueville in the introduction to his work declared it to be, a providential fact—by which he meant an irresistible, encompassing, and dominating fact or value. Who can doubt that, major war or other catastrophe aside, equality will be the point of reference for an ever-growing number of issues in social policy? Tocqueville himself was in no doubt whatever: "Would it be wise to imagine that a social movement the causes of which lie so far back can be checked by the efforts of one generation? Can it be believed that the equality which has overthrown the feudal system and vanquished kings will retreat before tradesmen and capitalists? Will it stop now that it is grown strong and its adversaries weak?"

Plainly Tocqueville did not think so, and if the prospect could on occasion sadden and depress him, he could yet, in the very final pages of *Democracy in America,* emphasize that what exhibited itself in his eyes as intellectual monotony, as a cultural desert brought on by the leveling of inequalities of talent, might well present itself differently to God. "We may naturally believe," he writes, "that it is not the singular prosperity of the few, but the greater well-being of all that is most pleasing in the sight of the Creator and Preserver of men." We may so believe, but it is only too evident, taking Tocqueville in the full, that he did not himself believe—could not bring himself to believe—in this wise. The pursuit of equality, he writes in scores of contexts, the never-ending insistence upon equality, once the gates have been opened, must not only sterilize individuality and erode the authority of reason and of culture, but bring on a constantly augmenting feeling of personal impotence, of envy-inspired malice that will in the end almost certainly bring about power in unprecedented shape.

Yet I would be doing him an injustice if I left it at this. "Providence," he writes in the final three sentences of *Democracy in America,* "has not created man entirely dependent or entirely free. It is true that around every man a fatal circle is traced beyond which he cannot pass; but within the wide extent of that circle he is powerful and free; and as it is with man, so is it with communities. The nations of our

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time cannot prevent the conditions of men from becoming equal, but it depends upon themselves whether the principle of equality is to lead them to servitude or to freedom, to knowledge or barbarism, to prosperity or to wretchedness."

VI

Was Tocqueville gifted, as some have said, with genuine prevision? Did he see things telescopically, as David Riesman has suggested, rather than through lenses designed for the scene immediately around him? Was he gifted—as a tiny few in history seem at times to be—with intuitions beyond the reach of ordinary analysis or method? It is tempting to believe that he was. I am mindful, though, of Tocquevillian intuitions gone wrong, or at least yet unfulfilled. I would prefer to go back to my characterization of *Democracy in America* as a composite: a composite of genius, to be sure, but nevertheless a composite of many sometimes conflicting, rarely articulated, never systematized, ideal types or models. They spring, as these almost always do in talented minds, from combinations of perception and reflection, of observation and sheer brooding. Historical vicissitude gives them pertinence, ranging from visions of progress to foretellings of degeneration or disaster.

In the end, Tocqueville himself confessed impotence in prophecy, and also a certain weariness. A few years before his death he asked in his *Recollections:* "Shall we ever, as we are assured by other prophets, perhaps as delusive as their predecessors, shall we ever attain a more complete and far-reaching social transformation than our forefathers foresaw and desired, and that we ourselves are able to foresee; or are we not destined simply to end in a condition of intermittent anarchy, the well-known, chronic and incurable complaint of old nations? As for me, I am unable to say; I do not know when this long voyage will be ended; I am weary of seeing the shore in each successive mirage, and I often ask myself whether the *terra firma* we are seeking does really exist, and whether we are not doomed to rove upon the seas forever."

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Letters from George Santayana

Early in my intellectual development the figure of George Santayana loomed large on the philosophical horizon. As an undergraduate I read his Life of Reason *under the tutelage of Morris R. Cohen, who used it as a text of sorts in one of his courses. Cohen's admiration for Santayana was surprisingly unqualified, and the felicity with which Santayana expressed his insights made most of us devotees of his inspired common sense.*

When I began graduate studies at Columbia University I discovered a veritable Santayana cult, centered mainly around The Life of Reason. *The high priest of the cult was Dean F. J. E. Woodbridge, under whom I wrote my dissertation and who claimed to have reread* The Life of Reason *at least once a year. John Dewey was more reserved in his expressions of enthusiasm but openly sympathetic to Santayana's naturalism, despite Santayana's failure to explain in his own terms how thought could be practical.*

The publication of the series of works by Santayana beginning with Skepticism and Animal Faith *was regarded as a puzzling departure from his basic naturalism. One unforgettable memory I have retained is of Dean Woodbridge reading from Santayana's* Dialogues in Limbo *at a late afternoon seminar, so moved by the thought and language of Democritus, the character who seems to speak for Santayana, that tears ran down his face.*

It was natural, therefore, that when I began to publish I should send Santayana copies of my work, not out of intellectual piety, but in gratitude for the delight and instruction his books gave me. I never became reconciled to Santayana's later political views. Despite his contention to the contrary, his apologia for the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century, secular or religious, is not compatible with the views expressed in The Life of Reason.

The footnotes to the letters are mine.

SIDNEY HOOK

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c/o Brown Shipley & Co.
123, Pall Mall, London, S.W. 1
Rome, Dec. 26, 1929

(Postcard to Sidney Hook)

Thank you very much for your book,* which I began with high hopes of understanding *at last,* but soon the impenetrable cloud of abstract language drowned that dawning ray! Poor me, I wish you would call "thinking" brains, and "experience" farming, factories, and railroads. I think if I could get at the concrete subject-matter which you have in mind, I should agree almost everywhere with you about it, and about its relation to the superstructure. You have shaken off the genteel tradition and are bringing the masculine business side of American life into philosophy. I can't help thinking that this could be done more clearly by sticking to the categories of Aristotle or of Spinoza and being, within that frame, frankly materialistic. I for one could then subscribe to everything, since materialism has always been the background of my ideas. Yours truly, G. Santayana

c/o Brown Shipley & Co.
123, Pall Mall, London, S.W. 1
Rome, Jan. 27, 1930

Dear Mr. Hook

It is very kind of you to send me these three articles of yours, and I have been reading them with much interest and (I hope) some profit.

As I said on a post-card which I sent you some time since, I should feel a very general agreement with you—if you put things differently! For instance, on p. 124 of the Marx-Lenin article,† you seem to contrast "human needs" with material forces. But what efficacy of any sort could a "need," more than a thought or a prayer, have in the world if it were not a material impulse in an animal *body?* So the "ideas" whose power you exalt on p. 142, might find some difficulty in making themselves felt if *nobody* had them.

Yours sincerely,
G. Santayana

* *The Metaphysics of Pragmatism*, with an Introductory Word by John Dewey (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co., 1928).

† The article to which Santayana refers was "The Philosophy of Dialectical Materialism," *Journal of Philosophy* (1928), which contained, among other things, a criticism of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.*

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c/o Brown Shipley & Co.
123, Pall Mall, London
Rome, April 15, 1933

Dear Mr. Hook

Your *Marx*°—for which I am much obliged—has helped me to understand why, years ago, in attempting to read *Das Kapital*, I was stopped short at the theory of value, and dropped the thing as hopeless. It was not meant, you explain, to describe the facts, but to preach an ideal: things *ought* to be *valued* and paid for according to the labour they have cost. I know these are not your words, but I have boiled it down to that for my own consumption. And that—though morally and politically it is far from my own feeling—reconciles me to Marx theoretically: which is very satisfactory, because I otherwise entirely agree with him in his historical materialism—though mine is not "dialectical" but common or garden materialism—and also with his low opinion of capitalism. However, here, as in the theory of value, it seems to me that we must regard the position given to the subject, as well as the animus of the discussion, as dictated entirely by a political purpose. Marx wants to overthrow capitalism, and simply turns all the batteries of his learning and zeal upon it for that object. In other words, he writes to produce passion. To my own mind, absurd as capitalism is—I live on invisible and unearned money myself, I don't know why or how—it seems to be only a technical device accompanying industrialism; and the latter is the radical evil. I wish some day you would write another book to show that the only notion of *man producing things* is grotesquely superficial: man only "improves" land, cattle, poultry, fruit, and crops; nature alone produces; and the things man constructs, like houses and clothes and ships, are produced by nature through man, who is an integral part of nature. Isn't this simply economic materialism? And the value of all these things lies entirely in their uses, and not at all in the labour which may be required to make them available. This labour in fact subtracts from their value, in so far as it is forced labour; and this is the crying sin of our industrialism: that it forces millions of men to labour hopelessly in order to supply themselves—or the capitalists among them—with a lot of rubbish.

You Deweyfy Marx a good deal: wouldn't it be better to Marxify Dewey? In respect to the material basis of all life Marx and even Engels (though he hedges a little in the last letter, which you quote at the very end) seem to me much clearer and more honest than Dewey, Kallen, &

° *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* (New York: John Day Publishers, 1933).

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Co. Of course the ideal and conscious *phases of human life and action* count in the world; but they count because *they are also material,* and *through their material organs.* Does any of you seriously believe that a disembodied angel could invent or run a machine or even sing an opera?

And this leads me to say what I had intended to begin with: that I turned at first, with some trepidation, knowing your pragmatic associations, to your section on truth; and much to my relief and delight, after a few phrases at the beginning that had a slight flavour of heresy, I found everything straight and clear and free from that fanatical ardour in not seeing the obvious which characterizes so much of what is written on this subject. Richards too, in his *Mind of Mencius,* seems to have got out of the wood.

With many thanks and good wishes,
Yours sincerely,
G. Santayana

c/o Brown Shipley & Co.
123, Pall Mall, London, S.W. 1
Rome, June 8th, 1934

Dear Mr. Hook

I am much obliged to you for sending me "Communism Without Dogmas" and "What is Materialism?"° You were right if you supposed that I should be in general sympathy with you in both these matters. Yes even about the Soviets; because although you say I am an extreme conservative, that is true only in the sense that I utterly repudiate liberal claims and maxims, which make events turn on ideas, opinions, votes, majorities, and disembodied moral power. These things may be called powers in virtue of the material agencies and tendencies expressed in them—usually very ill expressed; but in themselves they are powerless. This sort of conservatism is identical with my materialism, not merely compatible with it. I am not a conservative in the sense of being afraid of revolutions, like Hobbes, or thinking order, in the *sense of peace,* the highest good; and I am not at all attached to things as they are, or as they were in my youth. But I love order in the sense of organized, harmonious, consecrated living; and for this reason I sympathize with the Soviets and the Fascists and the Catholics, but not at all with the liberals. I should sympathize with the Nazis too, if their system were, even in theory, founded on reality; but it is Nietzschean, founded on will; and

° *The Modern Monthly* (1934) and *The Journal of Philosophy* (1934).

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therefore a sort of romanticism gone mad, rather than a serious organization of material forces—which would be the only way, I think, of securing moral coherence. It seems to me that for their purpose the Soviets are better grounded: they have jettisoned a lot of lies, and I hope that they may succeed in establishing a great new order of society, definite, traditional, and self-justified. I see by your account (what I didn't know before) that they are forming a sort of orthodoxy, as did the early Councils of the Church. I trust they won't mix too many absurd commitments with their wisdom: because (as Plato said) though it may facilitate control of people to mix a few timely superstitions with your laws, it won't help you to meet and to master *things;* and too many superstitions will ruin you. Islam is a good instance of this, and Magic; because I have a notion that Islam came very near being a sort of military epicureanism—something most promising!

You define materialism in contemporary terms, which perhaps are not the most incisive. Matter can't exist without form, and its form gives definition to its powers; but matter flows through these forms which are not magic bodiless forces magnetizing it from outside: they are the forms it has assumed in flowing. That, to my mind, is the essence of materialism. As for consciousness, it is a hypostasis of some of these forms, a "second entelechy," doubly dependent.

Yours sincerely,
G. Santayana

C O P Y

c/o Brown Shipley & Co.,
123 Pall Mall, London, SW1
Venice, Oct. 13, 1934

Dear Mr. Calverton:°

Your letter of September 27, the reading of your book and the mention of Mr. Sidney Hook induced me to write the enclosed article. Mr. Hook stirred me up to form some idea of Karl Marx, and I had written him a letter, saying in part what I say here. You give me *carte blanche* as to length, and I have exceeded your proposed limits, in spite of cutting out several passages that seemed to wander too far from the main subject.

° This letter was sent to me by V. S. Calverton, to whom I suggested that he write Santayana to contribute to one of the many symposia he published in *The Modern Monthly.*

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I hope you will think that contribution suitable, and that it will arrive in time. If not, will you please return the MS (I am sorry I have no means here of getting it type-written) as I am putting together a book on Domination and Powers into which it will go.

Yours sincerely,
G. Santayana

Rome, December 15, 1935

Dear Mr. Hook

I write to thank you and Kallen for your book on "American Philosophy"° and I address you rather than him, although he is an older friend, because there is something in your paper which interests me very much, namely your account of your juvenile flirtation with Platonic Realism, and your pragmatic disillusion afterwards. Russell and Moore's early interest in essence had a great influence on me also; but just as in Plato the Ideas have a theological and zoological dignity which my essences wholly lack, so in Russell and Moore's "concepts," there was a strain—*strain* in both meanings of the word—which is absent from my "baubles," and from my affection for them. And your very living account of your enlightenment on this subject shows me, as I feel, where the trouble lies. It peeps out in the term "subsistence" (which I never use, except possibly by inadvertence, about the realm of essence); and it becomes obvious when you speak of *validity* and *truth*, as claimed by Platonic logic, for its structures. Didn't it become a commonplace some time ago that mathematics, in its own sphere, was not *true*, but only correct, congruous with itself, and consistent? And wouldn't the same thing hold of all the internal relations of one essence with another? When you speak of *meaning*, however, I am a little puzzled, unless you mean applicability and practical importance. A definition seems to me to have meaning, in that it specifies some essence, and distinguishes it from all others; and on those specified characteristics logical relations are demonstrably dependent. But these "meanings" are confined to the realm of essence; and I should entirely agree with you that both Platonic Ideas and mathematical equations have to be exemplified in the world, or at least in human discourse, which is a part of the world, before they can have any validity or truth. The first chapter of my *Realm of Truth*, on which I am lazily at work now, is to be entitled: *There are no*

° *American Philosophy: Today and Tomorrow*, edited by Horace Kallen and Sidney Hook (New York: Lee Furman, Publishers, 1935).

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necessary truths. All truths, in my use of terms, are eternal, but none are necessary; because truth is a synthetic view or description of existence, and all existence being contingent, all truth is so too. But it is eternally true that each accident that occurs occurs when and where it does.

I can't say I have read all of your volume. I skipped till I got to Holt and you, and then skipped most of the rest. I can't penetrate the thick crust of blind and wooly abstract diction which covers the no doubt fertile seeds of "American Philosophy."

Yours sincerely,
G. Santayana

c/o Brown Shipley & Co.
123, Pall Mall, London, S.W. 1
Rome, March 2, 1937

Dear Mr. Hook

You express my entire conviction when you say that philosophical detachment does not signify political indifference.° I happen to have lived in isolation from affairs, on account of hardly ever being in my own country or feeling any vital affinity to modern movements; but a man might recognize the relativity of morals and of human nature itself without surrendering any part of his loyalty to his own self or family or nation. On the contrary, nature and truth give us *carte blanche* in such matters, and every encouragement to play our particular part.

When it comes to joining your committee or endorsing its purposes, my difficulty is of an entirely different sort. I am not, and have never been, an American citizen: that is one consideration that perhaps rules me out. Besides, although as a philosopher I am sympathetically interested in the Russian experiment, and feel the radical justification of it ideally (as monastic life is also justified), as a man my associations are in the opposite camp, and I shouldn't like to parade a friendship that, in practice, might seem falsified. Finally, I don't understand in what sense Trotsky is to be defended. He is competent to defend his own ideas and actions, and I suppose his life, or his political interests in Russia, are not calling for defence by a committee of Americans. There is the question of the right of asylum; but this in the abstract is a very complicated question. No one has that "right"; but it may be a privilege to Switzerland or Holland or England to admit *émigrés* from other nations. Joining

° I had invited Santayana to join a committee I helped set up to discover the truth about the Moscow purge trials. Dewey and Russell had joined. Unfortunately, I kept no copies of my letters to Santayana.

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an agitation on that subject would rather suggest a protest against the *right of ostracism* and that I conceive to be a natural right inherent in any moral society.

I am therefore compelled to decline your invitation, which I should have done more curtly if it had not come from you personally; because I am very much indebted to you for your books about the Russian revolution, and should have been glad of [*sic*] show my appreciation, if the circumstances on this occasion did not make it altogether impossible.

Yours sincerely,
G. Santayana

c/o Brown Shipley & Co
123, Pall Mall, London, S.W. 1
Rome, June 4, 1938

Dear Mr. Hook

It is almost a year since I received your admirable article on "Dialectic and Nature"° (two copies by mistake, but both welcome) and now I get your "Folklore of Capitalism"†—not so important, but interesting for the sidelights it throws on American opinion. I had never heard of Thurman Arnold, and am almost tempted to send for his book. "Charm and debonair irrelevance" are foibles known to me, which I oughtn't to encourage in myself; not that at my age much spoiling or improving are possible; but rather that I should probably be disappointed, after a few pages, with the degree of the charm. As you know, it is an old Aristotelian axiom with me too that politics is a part of ethics—although Aristotle put it the other way round; but politics there means policy, not the history or physiology of government. The Catholic Church is an admirable instance, well known to me, of a persuasive institution, with a bold myth, that recommends itself to the statesman by its concomitant effects, up to a certain point. It *virtually* transmits a wise conception of human virtues and vices and a wise mood; but taken *literally*, it is fanatical and repressive. With this example familiarly present to me from infancy, and clearly understood from my youth up, I am inclined to accept organizations and myths that seem timely, and that produce concretions in art and morals. Since the Renaissance we have been consciously making for dissolution and chaos in these higher matters; but incidentally have built up unexampled science and machinery.

° *The Marxist Quarterly* (1938).
† *University of Chicago Law Review* (1938).

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These, or a well-sifted compendium and selection from them—such as Christendom kept of the classics—will probably be handed down to the next millennium, but the integrating dominant organization and myth will have to be new, so as to fit the impulses and capacities of the age, and to produce illusion in the public mind. I think, by the way, that this illusion has never been complete and need not prevent free thought in those really capable of thinking. It never was complete in Christendom, and all modern enlightenment came while orthodoxy was still official. To be sure, there was soon more than one sort of orthodoxy, which helped the crystal to dissolve of itself.

I suppose "frame-ups" are consistent errors covering themselves up with a bad conscience, as in the Dreyfus case. The authors, in such a predicament, are themselves victims of an initial mistake, not discovered in time. Was this the case with Trotsky, or was there a real conflict of policies?

With many thanks,
Yours sincerely,
G. Santayana

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The Third Man in the Boat

PETER PORTER

In god's decency
we mourn all three,
but one we say
was the death of Europe,
the salt foot in the bay
of tears, the beginning
of a new way
of speaking to men.

The second we need
for documentary purposes,
to do with sex
and lyrics and biography—
a cypher more or less,
we need not get him in focus
or know if fish
sucked out his eyes.

But for all men
who are not to be studied
in some university,
call up Mr. Vivian,
longer at sea and simpler in fate
who did not know that life
is more arbitrary
than anybody's poem.

● PETER PORTER, a journalist and broadcaster, writes for such journals as the *Observer, New Statesman*, and *Encounter*, and for BBC radio. His books of poetry include *The Last of England*, *After Martial* (from the Latin), and *Living in a Calm Country*.

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TEACHING

F. O. Matthiessen

KENNETH S. LYNN

Teachers of American literature who were born, as F. O. Matthiessen was, in the first years of this century, but who are still alive today, have seen the study of their subject move through three different eras. The first, which might be called the Era of Rediscovery, began with Van Wyck Brooks and H. L. Mencken around 1908; gathered strength in the nineteen-twenties and thirties from the work of Lewis Mumford, V. L. Parrington, Granville Hicks, Constance Rourke, and Newton Arvin; reached its most concentrated moment of excitement between 1939 and 1942, when Perry Miller's *The New England Mind*, Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*, and Alfred Kazin's *On Native Grounds* appeared in rapid and dazzling succession; and was finally organized into a triumphal march-past in the three-volume *Literary History of the United States* (1948) by Robert Spiller and an all-star cast of contributors.

During these forty years, the historic prejudice of college English departments against making teaching appointments and offering courses in American literature was also challenged and overcome. When Matthiessen entered Yale in the fall of 1919, *Moby Dick* was shelved under "Cetology" in the university library. "It was hardly an accident," he later recalled, "that when I graduated from college in the early nineteen-twenties, I knew very little of our own literature except some contemporary poetry that I had read with my friends." That he started to immerse himself in American literature as a graduate student at Harvard a few years later was decidedly not because he was studying with George Lyman Kittredge, Irving Babbitt, and John Livingston Lowes, but rather because he had read, and been inspired by, a new book of Lewis Mumford's, *The Golden Day* (1926). Yet by the time Matthiessen returned to Harvard as an instructor in 1929, colleges all over the country were instituting new courses in American literature, and students were flocking to them.

The men and women who taught and wrote about American literature in this period took pride in their literary heritage. At the same time, they were severely critical of American authors, and even more critical of the society that had produced them. The paradox of the Era of Rediscovery is that it was born in the polemical attacks of Brooks and Mencken on a number of American literature's most important traditions and most gifted spokesmen, and was perpetuated by a younger generation of scholar-teachers whose attitudes toward the United States were tense with contradictions. The poignant dedication page of *American Renaissance* is a case in point. In thanking two friends "who have taught me most about the possibilities of life in America," Matthiessen affirmed a faith in the land of his birth in the teeth of torturing doubts.

Such contradictions made for brilliant books and moving lectures. However, there was a considerable psychological cost in living at such a pitch of intellectual and emotional ambivalence. The nervous breakdown that Van Wyck Brooks suffered toward the end of the nineteen-twenties was the shattering climax of his love-hate relationship with the American past. (Thereafter Brooks abandoned literary criticism in favor of literary nostalgia, having discovered that nostalgia

KENNETH S. LYNN is the author of *Visions of America*, which is dedicated to the memory of F. O. Matthiessen. *A Divided People*, on which he is now at work, will be published in 1977.

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was psychologically safer.) Matthiessen also suffered some sort of breakdown in the course of writing *American Renaissance,* and nine years after the book's appearance he jumped to his death from a hotel bedroom. In the course of the next quarter of a century, other professors of American literature decided that they too would rather sink in boundless deeps than float on vulgar shoals. ("Give me, ye gods, an utter wreck," cried Melville, "if wreck I do.") One way or another, the study of American literature became the means through which a shockingly large number of gifted teachers tried—and ultimately failed—to work out an accommodation with the world around them.

The personal urgency that marked the study of American literature before World War II carried over into the nineteen-fifties and beyond. Nevertheless, the appearance of *Literary History of the United States* at the end of the forties signaled the emergence of a more impersonal, more complacent attitude. Chapter by chapter, *Literary History* recalled the troubled discernments of the Era of Rediscovery. Yet the general lavishness of the enterprise, its comprehensive scope, its impressively detailed bibliographies, and some of its contributors' unalloyed confidence that American literature was destiny's darling—all reflected a new spirit that had emerged out of the global victory of American military power and the triumphant return to health of the American economy. In literary study, as in life, we had entered the Imperialist Era.

Extravagant claims about the importance of American authors now became the order of the day. Minor writers were hailed in terms previously reserved for major writers, while major writers were treated as if their achievements ranked with Goethe's or Shakespeare's. New editions of American authors were put forth, with elaborate textual apparatus that reeked of reverence in every variant comma. Graduate students produced doctoral dissertations with such astounding titles as "Rufus W. Griswold: The Major Phase," and hack writers struck it rich with coffee-table books about Scott and Zelda, "Mr. Papa," Mark Twain, and other delightfully colorful characters. This was also the era in which the New Criticism and an unspeakably vulgar porno-criticism came into fashion—and no wonder. For the refusal of the New Critics to be bothered with social questions, and the active delight that the porno-critics took in revelations of psychosexual maladjustment and suffering, perfectly suited the deadened conscience and casual brutality of imperial America.

Like most of their fellow citizens, teachers of American literature today have a very different view of the world they live in than they did ten years ago. Yet the surprising—and depressing—fact is that this has not inspired them to take a new and harder look at the subject they teach. Perhaps it is the frightening prospect of a collapse of the social order that causes them to clutch, as at a straw, at reassuringly familiar ideas about the American past. Perhaps they are also intimidated by the more mundane thought that if they retreat from the inflated estimates of the Imperialist Era they will not be able to justify the substantive importance of their subject to budget-conscious deans. But whatever the explanation for their behavior, one fact is indisputable: unlike teachers in a number of other fields, professors of American literature have not risen to the challenge posed by the current crisis in American values.

Unwilling to go through the painful process of reexamining their cherished assumptions about American literature, some professors have simply abandoned the field and are now investing their energies in such promising growth stocks as structuralism, women's studies, and film. Most professors, however, have met the challenge of the times by falling silent. They are still giving courses in American literature, but if writing is the sign of continuing mental activity, then they are no longer thinking about what they are saying to students. In the present era, the Era of Paralysis, the senior Americanist at a leading university on the East Coast has not published so much as a book review in the last nine years; precisely the same situation obtains at a leading university on the West Coast; and across the continent that separates them there stretches a chain of extinct volcanoes, most of which do not even have the dignity of being white-topped.

The prevailing silence, it is only fair to say, is not universal. Books on individual American writers and on general themes in Ameri-

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can literature continue to be published every month of the year. For the most part, however, the authors of the individual studies have approached their subjects as if they were going to church, while the authors of the theme books have shied away from the disturbing implications of their material. The idea that American literature is a deeply flawed body of work which nevertheless can help us to understand the innermost propulsions of the American people does not have many genuinely serious advocates on college campuses these days.

In a time of caution and failing commitment, the need for strong models becomes acute. American scholars who want to break up the Era of Paralysis and restore our contact with our deepest sense of ourselves could do worse than to pattern their pedagogy after the whole-souled, risk-taking teaching of F. O. Matthiessen.

I first encountered Matthiessen in the fall of 1942, my sophomore year at Harvard, when I took his course in Shakespeare. I had come to college with the idea of studying English history and literature, and friends had advised me that Matthiessen's course was the best place to start. At the outset I was not impressed. A short, stocky man, largely baldheaded, and wearing rimless glasses, he looked to me like a grocer. His voice was hardly more commanding than his physical presence: it had a metallic quality, and went up and down the scale in a kind of singsong that I found annoying. Apparently the only hand gesture in his repertoire was a sudden downward motion, thumb-side down, palm open, followed by a lateral movement in the direction toward which the palm faced. That hand gesture, however, turned out to be symbolic of what I most loved about his teaching. For the downward part of the gesture was a cutting motion, as if he were trying to force his way to the axis of reality, and the sideward part was a revelatory motion, like the pushing aside of a curtain, which was always accompanied by fresh insights into the meaning of existence.

He achieved his revelations by a variety of methods. He was as closely concerned with the specific qualities of Shakespeare's language and dramatic form as were the close readers of the New Criticism. At the same time, he always began the consideration of a play by placing it in a broad historical and cultural setting, and at the end of every analysis he turned once again from text to context—for Matthiessen agreed with Harley Granville-Barker's dictum that great dramatic art is the working out, not merely of the individual alone, but of society as a whole. He agreed, too, with Granville-Barker's conception of Shakespeare's work as plays to be acted as well as read. *Translation* was the title that Matthiessen gave to the published version of his Ph.D. thesis, and the crossing of boundaries from one realm to another was an idea that appealed to him in many ways. The translation of printed pages into living gestures was certainly one of his main goals as a teacher of Shakespeare. To that end, he required us to memorize several hundred lines of poetry, and to show our mastery of them, not by writing them down in class, but by reciting the speeches he called for in private meetings in his office. The fact that this requirement took a great deal of his time casts light on his dedication to teaching. He was absolutely determined—as he often pointed out that Coleridge was—"to reinstate the Logos as a living power, to demonstrate in poetry itself the word made flesh." Having us speak Shakespeare to him was a part of that effort.

Matthiessen also spoke to us from the plays. While he lacked the theatrical skills of his friend and fellow Shakespearean Theodore Spencer, there was a marvelous inwardness in his rendition of the lines that soon made you forget the technical deficiencies of his voice. Kent was the role that he would like to have played on the stage, but in the classroom he also made a fine Edgar and a very moving Lear. Even in parts that were obviously not suited to him, Matthiessen managed to be effective, because he always spoke from inside the character. The same thing was true of his lectures. What gave his commentaries on the plays their extraordinary emotional power was his imaginative involvement with the men and women he was talking about. It was not simply that he brought to bear upon them an exciting combination of textual criticism and historical reflection; somehow he crossed over into their

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lives. Matthiessen once said of Sherwood Anderson that he had tried to awaken his readers to "the fellowship in living, the fellowship in life." A sense of fellowship with the people of Shakespeare's world suffused Matthiessen's lectures.

While I realized that his course had a personal signature that was utterly lacking in other courses in English which I was taking that fall, I did not understand that he often made Shakespeare the stalking-horse of his own thoughts and feelings—not until the day he lost his temper. He was lecturing on *Hamlet,* and had not finished what he wanted to say when the bell sounded. A student sitting to Matthiessen's left at once arose and began moving toward the aisle. Suddenly Matthiessen swerved, stabbed his right index finger straight at the student, and yelled at the top of his lungs, "Will you sit down!" For approximately the next two minutes, he was out of control. He had poured his whole being into this course, he raged, and we would not even extend him the courtesy of hearing him out. Finally, he calmed down and said he was sorry for yelling, but before dismissing the class he cried out as if in pain, "Hamlet had a temper, too."

Matthiessen's identification with Hamlet was no simple narcissism. One of his most critical observations about American literature was that American authors often fell short of greatness because of their inability to transcend themselves. There was a narcissism, even a solipsism, in the poetry of Allen Tate, for example, that reduced his broodings about the tragedy of southern history to mere autobiography. Matthiessen also criticized Edna St. Vincent Millay for her failure to go beyond the personal "I" to the universal "you." In talking about the prince of Denmark, therefore, he always tried to keep Shakespeare's intentions firmly in mind. The function of a lecturer, Matthiessen believed, was to express with as much intensity as possible whatever a literary artist believed. At the same time, however, he also felt that a lecturer could never reach a really burning intensity without personal risk.

Not until after his death did I realize that in his childhood Matthiessen, like Hart Crane, had witnessed painful conflicts between his father and mother; that his mother had finally withdrawn from the situation, taking young Francis Otto with her; that while he had dedicated a book to her, he had never once expressed a sense of indebtedness to his father; and that he had asked in his suicide note to be laid to rest beside his mother in a cemetery in Springfield, Massachusetts. If I had known or had had foreknowledge of these facts in 1942, I would have had a fuller appreciation of what *Hamlet* must have meant to him. But when he talked about himself and Shakespeare's hero in the same breath, even a naïve sophomore could sense how completely he had incarnated himself in the play. In the preface to *American Renaissance* he had asserted that the student of a work of art should not only take into account the influences that shaped it, but should also make use of what he brings to it from his own life. Clearly, what this man preached he practiced to the hilt. I walked out of the lecture hall that day with a new idea of what I wanted to study at Harvard: I wanted to study whatever Matthiessen taught.

Three years of army life intervened before I could carry out that resolve. In the spring of 1946, however, I switched from English to American history and literature, because most of Matthiessen's courses were in the American field. I also discovered that Major Perry Miller had returned to the Harvard scene. In addition to taking a number of courses from both of them, I had the great good fortune to do tutorial work with Miller in the spring of my return, and to write a thesis on Melville under Matthiessen's supervision the following year.

Some day I hope to write about my relationship with Miller, for in the long run his tough and profane intelligence meant more to me than Matthiessen's intensity. But in the stirring time at Harvard immediately after the war, when classrooms were filled to overflowing with the oldest, most experienced students the university had ever known, and cold-war disillusionments had not yet destroyed hot-war hopes, Matthiessen was the man I wanted to follow. For one thing, he made himself available to students to a degree that other professors did not. In the summer of 1946, for example, I took his course on modern American poetry. The swollen enrollment meant that it was no longer possible for

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Matthiessen to listen to us recite the poems he required us to memorize, and so we wrote them out in blue books. Yet he still managed to keep in touch with us. In addition to encouraging us to speak up during his lectures, he scheduled an extra, informal meeting of the class every Tuesday afternoon in his office in Grays 18. The stars of those informal sessions were two graduate students, Richard Wilbur and Laurence Holland, but undergraduates were also welcomed, and their often inchoate ideas were treated with respect. In spite of the increasing anonymity of postwar Harvard, Matthiessen created a community with his students.

Running through all his courses and tutorials in American literature was the historical conception he had taken over from the early Van Wyck Brooks and then modified for his own purposes—that American culture was split across the brow. Some Americans were the products of a tradition of learning and knowledge that went back through nineteenth-century Harvard to the Puritans, but other Americans were the children of a radical, know-nothing tradition born on the raucous and lusty frontier. Lacking the nourishment that they might have derived from one another, both traditions had eventually lost their vitality. The tradition typified by Mark Twain was filled with anxiety, a sense of dread, an exasperating inferiority complex, while the tradition typified by Henry Adams was consumed by "the Boston doubt." In our own time, the failure of belief had become the central problem of American culture. Novelists were turning in on themselves, because there was nothing else to believe in. Meter, rhyme, and other outside controls were being abandoned by poets in consequence of the view that poetry was now an end in itself, rather than a means to an end.

The question that bothered me every time I heard this analysis was why Matthiessen should have been immune to the rampant sickness he described. As he never wearied of telling audiences, he was a devout Christian and an ardent socialist. The very fact of his faith seemed to me to be a paradox, and its structure of ideas was certainly riddled with illogicalities. As a good democrat he wanted literary scholarship to be applied "for the good and enlightenment of all the people, not for the pampering of a class"; yet no elitist in all of Harvard was more scornful than Matthiessen of Granville Hicks's willingness to tailor aesthetic judgments to political measurements. As a believer in Original Sin, Matthiessen accepted the idea that man can never achieve self-realization inside history. At the same time, he hailed the Russian Revolution as "the most progressive event of our century," and worked side by side with Communists and fellow travelers in a wide variety of popular-front activities. When asked by students why a man who made common cause with Harry Bridges went around talking like T. S. Eliot, he generally said something not very helpful about being a socialist *because* he was a Christian.

Had Matthiessen's religious faith been earned, as Eliot's was, or was it merely willed, like Auden's? I have never been sure, but my guess is that Christianity was an order which had a powerful appeal to a man who hated his own disorder, but which never sustained him for very long. I also wonder about his political enthusiasms. During my undergraduate days I took his radicalism at face value and admired him for it; but afterward, in Austria, where we both spent the summer of 1947 at the inaugural session of the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies, I began to see that he could respond to ordinary people only if they played traditional roles. He wanted the good citizens of Salzburg and environs to drink the weak and watery white wine of postwar Austria, and was disturbed that they had Cokes whenever they could cadge them. He also could not understand why they tuned their radios to the popular music—"American jazz," he called it, in his nineteen-twenties vocabulary—broadcast by Armed Forces Radio. Had they forgotten that they were living in Mozart's birthplace?

Matthiessen passionately wanted a better life for the masses: there is no doubt that he had lived by this ideal ever since he had read R. H. Tawney's *Acquisitive Society* as a Yale undergraduate. But at the heart of Matthiessen's socialism was his own insatiable need for human contact. This is why the vulgarity of mass culture upset him. In his loneliness he wanted the masses to behave in ways that would make it possible for him to be at ease with them; if they refused to, he felt more

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alienated than ever. Thus, when he knocked on doors in Boston's West End for Henry Wallace's Progressive party or some other unpopular cause, he was most successful when he chanced upon an immigrant family that still clung to the old customs. Otherwise, the door was apt to be slammed in his face. Matthiessen did have one way of getting through to the native-born sons of the working class with whom he sometimes tried to make acquaintance in South Boston bars: by meeting their enthusiasm for the Red Sox halfway. Although he rarely went to Fenway Park, he was a fan. As soon, however, as Apeneck Sweeney switched to talking about the Bruins, Matthiessen was lost.

The multiple ambiguities in his beliefs made a number of thoughtful students suspicious of him. In fact, there were some who hated Matthiessen, as did quite a few of his colleagues on the Harvard faculty. Nevertheless, his improbable combination of ideals gave him great strength as a teacher. It was his habit in the classroom to turn questions of form and technique in American literature into larger questions about American life, and as a Christian and a socialist he was prepared to explore a wide range of social and moral problems. In Matthiessen's lectures, his sensitive readings of such works as Whitman's "Out of the Cradle," Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, James's *Portrait of a Lady*, and Frost's "Death of the Hired Man" flowered into meditations on the meaning of democracy, the relationship of the artist to society, and the dignity of work, among other matters. The center of value in all his meditations was a vision of "man in his full revolutionary and democratic splendor," a phrase he had taken over from the nineteenth-century prophet of functional architecture, Horatio Greenough. When he talked about Melville or showed us Southworth and Hawes's magnificent daguerreotype of the shipbuilder Donald McKay, which he used as the frontispiece in *American Renaissance*, Matthiessen was able to make this vision come alive. But for the most part we were aware of it only as a ghost, in lectures that were full of ghosts.

Like many of his favorite American writers, Matthiessen was haunted by the feelings of loss and anguish they expressed. An almost unbearable undercurrent of personal suffering ran through his lectures at times. For example, in an analysis I heard him give of "Mr. Flood's Party" in the summer of 1946, he incorporated his own desolation within E. A. Robinson's, as he had good reason to do. Matthiessen and his most intimate friend, the painter Russell Cheney, had owned a house together in Kittery, Maine, an hour's drive or so from the Tilbury Town of Robinson's poetry. Cheney, however, had died in 1945, and in the summer of 1946 Matthiessen was trying to get used to living at Kittery without him. Listening to the sadness in Matthiessen's voice as he worked his way through the poem, I was sure that Eben Flood was not the only man who ever stood on a hilltop in the state of Maine, talking to himself, with only whiskey for company:

"Well, Mr. Flood, we have not met like this
In a long time; and many a change has come
To both of us, I fear, since last it was
We had a drop together. Welcome home!"
Convivially returning with himself,
Again he raised the jug up to the light;
And with an acquiescent quaver said:
"Well, Mr. Flood, if you insist, I might.

"Only a very little, Mr. Flood—
For auld lang syne. No more, sir; that will do."
So, for the time, apparently it did,
And Eben evidently thought so too;
For soon amid the silver loneliness
Of night he lifted up his voice and sang,
Secure, with only two moons listening,
Until the whole harmonious landscape rang—

"For auld lang syne." The weary throat gave out,
The last word wavered, and the song was done.
He raised again the jug regretfully
And shook his head, and was again alone.
There was not much that was ahead of him,
And there was nothing in the town below—
Where strangers would have shut the many doors
That many friends had opened long ago.

By bringing his own life into works of American literature, Matthiessen clarified as well as intensified their meaning. Occasionally, though, he altered their meaning—and in my judgment improved them. I had never cared for the poetry of Carl Sandburg, ever since I had attended one of his readings in my high school days. With his hair carefully combed into his eyes and his pseudofolksy voice, he had seemed to me to be an all-

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American fake. Matthiessen agreed that the staccato effects of his poetry were not in the same class with the magnificent flow of Whitman. Nevertheless, he asserted that Sandburg's "Happiness" was a good poem, and he made me believe it—by dint of changing the poem's point of view to fit a conflation of his own memories. As the poem told it, Sandburg had asked famous professors to tell him what happiness was, and they had shaken their heads as if he were trying to fool them. "And then one Sunday afternoon I wandered out along the Desplaines river / And I saw a crowd of Hungarians under the trees with their women and children and a keg of beer and an accordion." I felt that the poet's attitude toward this scene was marked by Sandburg's usual off-putting heartiness, but Matthiessen interpreted it differently, for personal reasons.

First of all, Matthiessen had spent part of his childhood in Sandburg country, albeit the river he remembered was not the Desplaines, but the Illinois. More important, the poem recalled for him one of the crucial experiences of his college years. Although he was deeply involved in the Elizabethan Club, the *Yale Daily News*, the *Yale Literary Magazine*, and other undergraduate activities, he had not been content, even then, to live his whole life within academic fences. Accordingly he had volunteered to teach English to a group of men at the New Haven Hungarian Club who were trying to qualify for citizenship. After the last session of the class, his students took their teacher down to the cellar, where they had been fermenting casks of Prohibition wine. Several glasses later, the stars seemed unusually bright as the young undergraduate walked back to the Yale campus. He had felt at home in the comradeship of these men. In "Happiness," Matthiessen viewed Sandburg's convivial Hungarians through the mirage of a vanished happiness of his own, thereby endowing the poem with a wistfulness that considerably enhanced its appeal.

Since there was such a strong autobiographical element in his criticism, I was struck by Matthiessen's silence, in his lectures and tutorial conversations, on the subject of homosexuality in American literature. His comments on Whitman's interest in young male beauty were singularly guarded and inadequate, while the blatant case of Hart Crane obviously made him uncomfortable. The conclusion I drew from this at the time, and have subsequently had no reason to doubt, was that Matthiessen's own sex life was a guilt-ridden horror to him. So full of revulsion was he that he could barely pronounce the word homosexuality, let alone release his feelings through candid discussions of Melville's joke about "Devil's-Tail Peak and Buggery Island" and related matters.

But if he avoided the subject of homosexual love, he seemed eager to talk about death. Vachel Lindsay's suicide, Hurstwood's suicide in *Sister Carrie*, Poe's self-destructive impulses—such things loomed large in our tutorial conversations. In the note he left when he jumped from the twelfth floor of Boston's Manger Hotel, Matthiessen said that he did not know "how much the state of the world has to do with my state of mind." There was a good deal of speculation in the following days that his death had indeed been a political act, on the model of Jan Masaryk's defenestration. I myself cannot accept this view. Not only had Matthiessen been thinking about killing himself long before Czechoslovakia fell victim to the cold war, but I am convinced that he had long since decided on the way he would do it. For a certain scene involving Clifford Pyncheon in Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables* held his imagination in thrall. He referred to it often during my discussions with him about my thesis on Melville (Melville, too, was fascinated by the scene), and he wrote about it—in the present tense, significantly enough—in *American Renaissance:*

> Clifford has retrogressed until he is hardly more than an idiot, a spoiled child who takes a childish pleasure in any passing attraction that can divert him from the confused memories of his terrible years of gloom. But, occasionally, deeper forces stir within him, as one day when he is watching, from the arched window at the head of the stairs, a political procession of marching men with fifes and drums. With a sudden, irrepressible gesture, from which he is restrained just in time by Hepzibah and Phoebe, he starts forward as though to jump down into the street, in a kind of desperate effort at renewed contact with life outside himself, "but whether impelled by the species of terror that sometimes urges its victim over the very precipice

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which he shrinks from, or by a natural magnetism, tending towards the great centre of humanity," Hawthorne found it not easy to decide.

Nor do I find it easy to decide why Matthiessen jumped. Yet I believe that *The House of the Seven Gables* brings us closer to an explanation than does his suicide note.

Another popular theory about Matthiessen is that the golden day of his teaching was before the war. I will never agree to this. In postwar Harvard he was still the same teacher who had changed the direction of my life in 1942. Furthermore, I believe that at the Salzburg Seminar in the summer of 1947 he reached the zenith of his career. A number of distinguished professors taught at Schloss Leopoldskron that summer—Alfred Kazin, Wassily Leontief, Benjamin Wright, Margaret Mead. But Matthiessen was the acknowledged leader. He worked harder and longer at getting to know the European students than did anyone else, and he gave a lecture at the beginning of the seminar and another toward the end that framed the experience for us all.

The first lecture was a speech of welcome, delivered in the garden of the Schloss. Somewhere in Matthiessen's childhood there was a garden that had spelled security to him, because it was associated with his mother. In an act of imaginative displacement, he had evoked this placid spot in the garden imagery of his first book—a biography of Sarah Orne Jewett dedicated to the memory of his mother, Lucy Orne Matthiessen. By the end of the book, however, he had worked past his nostalgia; fenced-in gardens were for pathetic, outdated people who were afraid to face reality. Standing in the garden at Schloss Leopoldskron, he spoke of perilous journeys across boundaries, and of the chance we had to create an international community. Near the end of the seminar, he spoke to us in the library, but once again he brought a garden and a perilous journey together in our imaginations, for his text was the fifth section of "The Waste Land": "After the torchlight red on sweaty faces. . . ." That is my best memory of Matthiessen, talking out of his American heart in the heart of Europe, just before the Era of Rediscovery began to die.

From a Nerja Hotel Window

DIANA DER HOVANESSIAN

The voices of the women of Spain
are like the wines of Málaga
made from long white grapes,
sweet but not sweeter
than the green sunshine
of early morning.

The voices of the women of Spain
are low but filled
with tense threads of laughter,
the sound of two sisters
talking after long separation.

DIANA DER HOVANESSIAN is one of the Massachusetts poets in the schools. Her poems have appeared in a number of magazines, and have also been translated and published in Armenia and Russia.

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The Other Gibbon

HUGH TREVOR-ROPER

It is difficult to separate Gibbon from *The Decline and Fall*. All his life, almost all his writing, is related to that great work. His autobiography, one of the most perfect in our language, derives its unity thence: it is an intellectual biography, the biography of a mind, undistracted by mere episode or anecdote; and the mind is the mind of the author of *The Decline and Fall*. His *Vindication* is the vindication of his scholarship in the first volume of *The Decline and Fall*. If we read anything else of Gibbon, it is primarily because we are interested in *The Decline and Fall*, and in him as the author of it.

Nevertheless there is another Gibbon, independent of his greatest work and, since genius is indivisible, this other Gibbon is no less original. In this essay I wish to say something of this other Gibbon. I shall do so by concentrating on two periods: one before the conception, the other after the delivery, of *The Decline and Fall*. For in each of these periods, I believe, he showed himself a pioneer, looking past his English contemporaries—among whom, as a scholar, he was never at home—toward the intellectual world of the nineteenth century.

First, let us look at Gibbon's earliest publication: a short book which he began in 1759, at the age of twenty, at the close of his student years in Lausanne, and which he therefore wrote in French. For in Lausanne, as he writes, he had ceased to be an Englishman. It was only his two years in the Hampshire militia, from 1760 to 1762, that made him an Englishman; and, even so, the process was never complete. This in one sense was an advantage to him. Intellectually, he was a citizen of Europe at a time when English scholarship and English philosophy were at a low ebb. Gibbon's book was entitled, with becoming modesty, *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*.

Of this first-published work, Gibbon has written, in his autobiography, with the condescension of maturity toward immaturity, but also at a length that argues affection and even some pride. Immediately after telling us of his early ambition to be a historian, he proceeds from thought to action and describes the genesis of his *Essai*. Its design, he says, was suggested to him by a "refinement of vanity, the desire of justifying and praising the object of a favourite pursuit." But that favorite pursuit, it soon appears, was not, after all, historical; or at least it was not directly historical. It was classical literature.

For Gibbon was not only a scholar and a historian; he was also a lover of literature. His deep and sensitive love of literature, both ancient and modern, shines through all his work—and indeed interrupts it: for he tells us that in 1781, when he had brought *The Decline and Fall* down to the end of the Western Empire, he contemplated closing it there and turned aside, for a whole year, to indulge himself in the pleasure of rereading Greek literature. In 1759 he had little knowledge of Greek, but he clearly delighted in the great Latin poets, Lucretius and Virgil, Horace and Juvenal. Above all he loved Virgil. Later, having mastered Greek, he would be carried away by Homer, "the father of poetry and the Bible of the ancients," who soon became "the most intimate of my friends." Every

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citation from Homer in his writings, even in his footnotes, breathes the exhilaration he derived from the buoyant vigor of that "universal genius": the scudding of a ship before a fresh wind, the audible twanging of a bow, the visible bound of the arrow from the string. On one occasion, remarking that a certain scholar had been able to discover only a single trifling misprint in a particularly accurate edition of Homer, he asks rhetorically, Who but a pedant would read Homer in such a spirit? To Gibbon, for all his scholarship, literature was an end in itself; he was a lover of literature before he was a historian; and unless we realize this, we understand only a part of his work and of its vital force.

But in 1759 Gibbon felt that this classical literature, in which he so delighted, was in need of defense. At Lausanne, he had read the French philosophers, and had been attracted to them. He felt that he was one of them in spirit. But he found, with some dismay, that they did not share his love of the ancient writers: indeed, in many ways, they reacted against them, or at least against the cult of them which, by now, had become so intense and specialized. As he put it in his *Memoirs*: "In France, to which my ideas were confined, the learning and language of Greece and Rome were neglected by a philosophic age. The guardian of those studies, the Academy of Inscriptions, was degraded to the lowest rank among the three royal societies of Paris; the new appellation of *érudits* was contemptously applied to the successors of Lipsius and Casaubon; and I was provoked to hear . . . that the exercise of the memory, their sole merit, had been superseded by the nobler faculties of the imagination and the judgment." He had been particularly provoked by the suggestion of d'Alembert that in every century self-appointed "philosophers" should examine the scholarly writings of the past and destroy those which, in their opinion, were no longer valid: that is, those which did not contribute to their own fashionable philosophy.

Such was one impulse behind Gibbon's *Essai*. But there was also, probably, another. He was at this time in love with Suzanne Curchod. He began to write the *Essai* in Lausanne, and his original intention was to dedicate it to her. It was thus an intellectual display, for her benefit. He finished it, on his return to England, at his father's house at Buriton in Hampshire. Afterward, in the intervals of his service in the militia, he revised and partially rewrote it. By February 1761 it was complete. But he did not publish it. Perhaps the original impulse had died with his courtship of Suzanne Curchod. At all events, it was the stronger authority of his father which, here as there, prevailed. Thinking that his son, with his foreign education, might find diplomatic employment, and that the publication of a work in French might assist him to do so, the elder Gibbon encouraged him to publish his essay. It was published in July 1761, dedicated not now to Suzanne Curchod but to his father, and Gibbon received his first copy while in camp with the militia at Alresford. A few days later, by his father's direction, he presented a copy to the duke of York in person "as he was at breakfast in Colonel Pitt's tent." The duke "received it courteously . . . promised to read it, and gave it to Sir William Boothby."

In his *Memoirs* Gibbon enumerates the faults of this early essay. "Alas, my stock of erudition at that time was scanty and superficial." Although he cited Greek authors, he was in fact familiar only with the Latin classics; the book was ill constructed, badly arranged. Above all, its argument was not lucid: it was marred by "a kind of obscurity and abruptness which always fatigues, and may often elude, the attention of the reader." For this obscurity there was an explanation. When he wrote it, Gibbon's mind was still overpowered by the influence of Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois,* which had been the "chief delight" of his studious years in Lausanne, and the style was not yet his own: it was that of his master. He yielded to "the desire of expressing perhaps a common idea with sententious and oracular brevity." Consequently, his meaning was often unclear. "Alas, how fatal has been the imitation of Montesquieu!" Nevertheless the book was well received abroad; two editions were printed in France and Switzerland, and reviewers praised it. "In England, it was received with cold indifference, little read and speedily forgotten"—at least until the success of *The Decline and Fall* redirected attention to it. However, Gibbon then refused to sanc-

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tion a reprint: he was now sure of his fame and preferred not to be judged by his juvenilia.

Gibbon's censure of his own first work is essentially just. No one would read it now, were it not by him. Nevertheless, it deserves to be studied, for in substance it was a challenge to his generation. Here, in literature, as later in historiography, we see Gibbon detaching himself from current fashions and pointing the way toward a new philosophy. In order to see this, it will be convenient to disentangle and summarize the arguments that Gibbon himself, in his own words, "heaped on each other without method or connexion."

Gibbon begins by observing, as a general truth—it is an axiom which will reappear in *The Decline and Fall*—that the history of the sciences is the history of human happiness while political history, the history of empires, is the history of human misery. This fact, now recognized, has put a premium on the sciences, and the French philosophers, in particular, have responded to it in their own way. Placing all their emphasis on the sciences, which are continuously progressing, they have devalued the study of literature—that is, essentially, of classical literature—which, after the enthusiasm of the Renaissance, has gradually dwindled into mere philology. The decisive moment in this devaluation, says Gibbon, was the famous Battle of the Books, the contest between the Ancients and the Moderns, at the end of the seventeenth century. Then modernity, armed with wit, had won an easy victory over conservatism, encumbered by pedantry. The "modern" wits made philology ridiculous, and, in the eyes of the world, what is ridiculous must be wrong. So now, in the intoxication of victory, the lively but superficial "philosophers" dismissed the outmaneuvered classical scholars as mere pedants, *érudits*.

In many ways Gibbon too was a "philosopher." His whole cast of mind was modern, and he too could ridicule the ponderous but stuffy learning of "the last age." But he was also essentially a scholar, and he was not prepared to jettison the great scholars of the past simply because some of their imitators had lost their touch. Gibbon was willing to abandon the mere compilers and commentators like Gruter and Salmasius in order to defend true scholarship, as illustrated by Erasmus, Casaubon, the two Vossii, Bentley. Standing firmly on defensible ground, he would challenge the lively philosophers and not disavow, for himself, *le nom flétrissant d'érudit*.

What was the firm ground that he would defend? It is here that Gibbon shows his precocious originality. In his *Essai* he defends the study of classical languages not merely as the professionalism of a close guild of experts, nor merely as a set of literary models, but as a living, humane, "philosophical" study, the means of re-creating a whole context within which both literature and history may find their true significance and teach true lessons. The world of antiquity, to him, is a total world, more comprehensive than its languages; and its languages are to be understood within the context of the world they reveal.

This is not an entirely novel idea. It would have been avowed by the great scholars of the Renaissance, from Erasmus to Casaubon. Indeed, a generation before Gibbon's birth, it had been revived by Richard Bentley: it was by drawing on such resources that Bentley, in his famous *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris*, had destroyed the fashionable *littérateurs* of his time. But since Bentley, things had changed. In classical literature, as in philosophy, the mid-eighteenth century was, as Mark Pattison has called it, a "frivolous and superficial age." Between the philological pedants, who rendered scholarship tedious and distasteful, and the gentlemen-scholars, concerned only with ornamental learning, true scholarship had foundered. There was no need for it; it had no real function, and the new generation of "philosophers" had some excuse for sweeping it aside.

It was in these circumstances that the young Gibbon launched his challenge. He protested against such artificial distinctions. All the humane sciences, he insisted, are interconnected; great literature is not less great for being the product of time and place; and the function of true scholarship is to re-create that time and place, so that literature, being seen in its context, can resume its educative function: a function, he adds, which is greater than that of the physical sciences, for it ex-

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presses the whole range of human philosophy, and it is a more glorious task for learning "to develop and perfect mankind than to enlarge the bounds of the known universe."

This insistence that literature, to be appreciated, must be seen in its true context is central to Gibbon's *Essai*. The pedantic scholars laboriously reconstituted the texts of the classical authors. The men of letters then quoted those texts. But the original authors wrote neither for these nor for those: they wrote for their contemporaries, and their work, even if it transcended its contemporary context, was still enriched by it. Therefore, in order to appreciate their work fully, it was necessary to re-create that context. "We, set beneath another sky, born in another age, will necessarily miss all their beauties unless we can place ourselves at their point of view. A detailed knowledge of their time is the only way that can lead us thither. A few superficial ideas, a little information drawn at need from a commentary, will allow us to grasp only the most obvious and immediate beauties: all the grace and subtlety of their work will escape us. . . . Knowledge of antiquity, that is our true commentary." On it true understanding, true appreciation, true criticism must depend.

"*La connoissance de l'antiquité, voilà notre vrai commentaire.*" That is the central message of Gibbon's *Essai*. And what is *la connoissance de l'antiquité* but the German *Altertumswissenschaft* which, according to the historians of classical scholarship, was brought in, or restored, by the great Germans of the nineteenth century? But here we see it advanced, as necessary doctrine, half a century ahead of the earliest of them, by the young Gibbon, aged twenty-one. It was not without some reason that Gibbon, looking back on his juvenile *Essai*, and admitting its defects of style and arrangement, nevertheless ended on a note of self-satisfaction. Had not "a far superior artist, my friend Sir Joshua Reynolds" admitted to him that, on looking at his own earliest paintings, "he was rather humbled than flattered by the comparison with his present works; and that after so much time and study, he had conceived his improvement to be much greater than he found it to have been"?

Gibbon's main purpose, in his *Essai*, is to restore to its proper dignity the study of ancient literature; but the philosophy which he expresses—that all human sciences are interdependent—is applicable also, and is in fact applied by him, to the study of history. The exclusive claims of the classical philologists of his time, their insistence that classical scholarship is self-contained—these, says Gibbon, have damaged not only philology and literature, but also history. Nor is it only overspecialization that has had this effect. A similar charge can be made against an erroneous philosophy. Here we come to another motif that is buried in Gibbon's essay but can be usefully disengaged. This motif is his opposition to the historical philosophy of his time.

In Gibbon's time there were two traditions in historiography, one old and one relatively new. The old was the "humanist" tradition of the Renaissance. According to this tradition, history was a branch of literature whose function was largely moral: "philosophy teaching by examples." The new tradition was the historical skepticism which had been made fashionable at the close of the seventeenth century by the *émigré* French Huguenot, Pierre Bayle. By his perpetual skepticism Bayle had succeeded in undermining all historical certainty and had thus destroyed in advance any attempt to construct a positive historical philosophy. In 1759, when Gibbon began his *Essai*, the "Pyrrhonism" of Bayle had penetrated deeply into historical writing. It is apparent in Voltaire's historical work; it even infected the "humanist" historical outlook of that otherwise unskeptical writer, Dr. Johnson. Until this solvent Pyrrhonism was transcended, it was difficult to conceive of a positive, modern philosophy of history. Already in his *Essai* Gibbon, incidentally to his belief in the unity of the sciences, declared his interest in transcending it.

"Our age," he writes, when introducing his comments on the constructive function of criticism, "has brought forth a historical Pyrrhonism which is at once useful and dangerous." Under the influence of Bayle, historical certainty has been destroyed, and this process, which could be valuable if used for the establishment of historical truth, has ended by rendering such truth unattainable and enabling historians to fill the void with irresponsible hypotheses, which in turn are the basis of unwarrantable systems. But the

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true function of criticism is not to destroy or to demonstrate: it is "to compare the weight of opposing probabilities." Brilliant systems should be distrusted. We should start from a different point. We should respect facts and proceed from them tentatively, empirically, and comparatively. How this can be done has been shown by Montesquieu—Montesquieu, the man who reassembled, in the form of vestigial sociology, the evidence dissipated by the Pyrrhonism of Bayle. It was for this reason that Gibbon was so impatient with d'Alembert, who had regarded "irrelevant" facts as expendable. Not at all, replies Gibbon: in the interrelation of the sciences, whose roots are interlaced like those of distinct trees in a forest, all facts are potentially valuable. "Therefore, let us preserve them all most carefully. A Montesquieu, from the meanest of them, will draw conclusions unknown to ordinary men." By seeing facts in their context, by looking for connections between them, by distinguishing among them, and by comparing not only facts but contexts, "philosophical history" can be built up.

For the historian, to Gibbon, must be a philosopher. To illustrate "philosophic history" he turns to the Roman historians and compares Livy with Tacitus. Both, he says, are great historians: that is, both rise above the mere compilers who see no more in history than a catalog of facts. But there is a great difference between them. Whereas Livy writes as a rhetorician, playing on the emotions, bringing his reader into the drama of events, Tacitus uses his art "to link before our eyes the chain of events, and to instil into our soul the wisest of lessons. I cross the Alps with Hannibal, but I am present at the Council of Tiberius." Livy, in fact, is a "humanist historian": a dramatist and a moralist. He describes the abuse of power, the triumph of revenge and liberty. But he does not explain the causes of history. "The laws of the Decemvirs"—that is, the old laws of the early Roman Republic—"their character, their defects, their connexion with the genius of the Roman people, with the party of the Decemvirs and their ambitious designs—all these he entirely forgets. He does not tell me how these laws, made for a petty republic, poor and half-civilised, overturned that republic when the power thus established had carried it to the highest pitch of greatness. I would have found this in Tacitus. I think so, not only from the known temper of his genius, but still more from the bold and varied picture which he gives us of the laws, those products of corruption, of liberty, of equity and of faction."

Thus, in his *Essai*, Gibbon advocated not only a new kind of classical scholarship, but also a new kind of history. Neither, of course, was entirely new. In classical scholarship he was, as he felt, advocating a return to the past, to the great examples of Budé, Scaliger, Casaubon, and, in more recent times, Bentley. In historiography, he was deeply influenced by the philosophical example of Montesquieu and the practice of David Hume, whose *Natural History of Religion* is a visible influence on part of his *Essai*, and whose *History of England* had recently been published. But these facts do not detract from the remarkable intellectual quality of Gibbon's juvenile *Essai*. In both literature and history he was expressing original views, and in both areas the underlying thesis was the same. That thesis was that all knowledge was interrelated, that specialization sterilized while "philosophy" united and, by uniting, made intelligible. This philosophy, as developed in the area of historiography, would lead forward to *The Decline and Fall*. I shall not follow it further now. I shall confine myself to its development, by Gibbon himself, in the field of literature.

In one of the unsignposted digressions which make the *Essai* so difficult to read, Gibbon illustrates his thesis by referring to his favorite Latin poet, Virgil. "It is impossible," he says, "to appreciate the plan, the art, the details of Virgil unless we are thoroughly acquainted with the history, the laws and the religion of the Romans, with the geography of Italy, with the character of Augustus, and with the peculiar and unique connexion which this Prince established with the senate and the people." He then examines the context of Virgil's poems in some detail and, in particular, describes the political background to the Georgics. For the Georgics, he insists, are not merely didactic poems, of great power and charm, on the subject of agriculture: they are a timely and delicate exercise in literary propaganda inspired by the particular solu-

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tion, by Virgil's patron Augustus, of an important political problem: the settlement on the land of the otherwise turbulent and dangerous veterans of the Civil Wars. "If you accept my ideas," Gibbon concludes this digression, "Virgil is not merely a writer who describes country pursuits: he is a new Orpheus who touches his lyre only to make savages lay aside their ferocity and to reunite them in the bonds of morality and law."

Gibbon's attempt to rescue Virgil's poetry from trivial or unworthy commentaries, and to see it in its real context, did not cease with his juvenile *Essai*. It was in defense of Virgil that he wrote, nine years later, his second published work, his *Observations on the Sixth Book of the Aeneid:* a devastating and anonymous exposure of the shoddy and pretentious scholarship of that literary buccaneer William Warburton, bishop of Gloucester. Warburton was an ignorant but arrogant man who, in the barren years of the mid-eighteenth century, had carved out by sheer aggression, and maintained by bravado and bullying, a personal despotism in the Republic of Letters. His huge and pretentious book, the *Divine Legation of Moses*, in which he claimed, among other things, that the descent of Aeneas into Hades in the sixth book of the *Aeneid* was an elaborate allegory of the Eleusinian mysteries, into which he supposed Virgil to have been initiated, had been published in 1735 and for a whole generation had been cited with respect. Gibbon read, or reread, it immediately after publishing his *Essai*. His decision to attack it as late as 1770, when it had already been criticized and Warburton was an old man, is evidence of its long acceptance, its apparent survival of earlier criticism. Gibbon was inspired, he afterward wrote, by a double motive: his hatred of the tyrant Warburton and his love of Virgil, whose poetry the bishop had demeaned by irresponsibly placing it in a false context. Only by treating Virgil's poetry in isolation from its true context, and thus acquiring an illegitimate freedom of speculation, had Warburton been able to build his elaborate hypotheses. By restoring that true context, Gibbon utterly demolished those hypotheses and vindicated the message of his *Essai* that knowledge of antiquity is the true commentary on classical literature.

By 1770, when he published his refutation of Warburton, Gibbon had already begun work on *The Decline and Fall*. In 1787 that work was complete, and he began to contemplate other projects. None of these projects came to maturity: those last fifteen years which he reckoned that the laws of probability assigned to him, would not in fact be granted. He died suddenly, at the age of fifty-seven, in 1794. But at the time of his death he was involved in a project which, I believe, deserves more attention than it has received; for it too had an important sequel in the next century.

This project was one that had tantalized Gibbon for many years. In essence, he wished to do for England what the great Benedictine scholars of the congregation of Saint Maur had done for France and what their disciple Ludovico Muratori had done for Italy: to present, in scholarly form, for the use of historians, the original sources of national history in the Middle Ages.

Gibbon had always venerated the learned congregation of Saint Maur, and while in Paris in 1763 had visited their "Benedictine workshop" at the abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Their greatest figures—Mabillon, Montfaucon, and Bouquet—were never named by him without respect, and in 1781, at the beginning of what he then envisaged as the last chapter of *The Decline and Fall*, he implicitly reproved his compatriots for their failure to emulate "the labour of Dom Bouquet and the other Benedictines" who had collected and published the medieval French historians. Afterwards, when composing his memoirs, he made a devastating comparison between the indolence of the well-endowed "monks of Magdalen," his own college at Oxford, and the industry of "the single abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés" from which had issued "the Benedictine folios, the editions of the Fathers, and the collections of the Middle Ages."

He was no less constant in his admiration for the Italian heir of the French Benedictines, Muratori, who had died in 1750. First as librarian of the Ambrosiana at Milan, then as archivist of the dukes of Modena, Muratori had exploited his opportunities and devoted his long life to the scholarly publication of the sources of medieval Italian history. Twenty-

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five volumes of medieval chronicles and four volumes of newly discovered inscriptions had been followed by six volumes of *Antiquities of Italy* and twelve volumes of *Annals of Italy;* and all these were familiar to Gibbon. On his journey to Rome in 1764 Gibbon used Muratori as a guide to inscriptions and acquired and read one of his dissertations. At Modena, he paid a visit of homage to the ducal library where Muratori had worked, and was shown round by his Jesuit successor. Once he had conceived the subject of his great work, he involved himself more deeply: "through the darkness of the Middle Ages," he wrote, "I explored my way in the *Annals* and *Antiquities* of the learned Muratori." Later, when he came to write the medieval volumes of *The Decline and Fall,* Muratori was "my ordinary and excellent guide," "my guide and master in the history of Italy." Muratori, he would afterward write, had not "aspired to the fame of historical genius"; he had moved "in the narrow circle of an Italian priest"; but he was scrupulous in his handling of evidence and "philosophical" in his interpretation of it, and all censure was disarmed by his modesty and by the vastness of his single-handed achievement: his accurate presentation of the original sources for a thousand years of his country's history.

One of the projects that occupied Gibbon after the completion of *The Decline and Fall* was a long essay, or "excursion," on "the Antiquities of the House of Brunswick," whose head, the elector of Hanover, was now king of England. For this essay, his main sources were the *Origines Guelficae* of Leibniz, recently published, and the *Antichità Estensi* of Muratori. For the House of Brunswick had an Italian as well as a German origin, and when Leibniz, its librarian and court historian, had undertaken to compile its history, the elector, at his request, had applied for assistance to the duke of Modena. In fact, it was as a direct result of this German request that Duke Rinaldo I had recalled Muratori from Milan to reorganize the archives of Modena which, till then, had been "in a deplorable state." Thus even after he had taken leave of *The Decline and Fall,* Gibbon was occupied with the work of Muratori, and it is in his unfinished "excursion" on "the Antiquities of the House of Brunswick" that he pays to Muratori his most elaborate tribute of praise and gratitude.

It is against this background that we must see the enterprise to which Gibbon turned during what was to prove his last visit to England, in 1793. At that time he saw an opportunity to execute a plan that had never been far from his mind. He wished to emulate the Maurists and Muratori and publish the entire range of English medieval chronicles. The opportunity was supplied by his discovery of the ideal editor: the Scottish historian and antiquary, John Pinkerton.

Pinkerton was at that time thirty-five years old. He had begun his career by publishing various poetical pieces, collections of old Scottish ballads (some of them fabricated by himself), and—under the pseudonym John Heron—a series of *Letters of Literature.* These ventures had attracted the notice of Bishop Percy, Horace Walpole, and other literary men. In his *Letters of Literature,* among other impertinencies, Pinkerton had presumed to declare Virgil a third-rate "tinsel poet," to correct Gibbon on a point of scholarship, and to reform the English language in an absurd manner. Gibbon evidently knew this book but magnanimously overlooked it, and afterward, when Pinkerton appeared as a serious scholar, warmly supported him. In 1788, in a series of articles in the *Gentleman's Magazine,* Pinkerton advocated the publication of the English national chronicles; the next year he published a collection of the Latin lives of the Scottish saints, to which Gibbon subscribed; and in 1790 he produced an *Inquiry into the History of Scotland,* which Gibbon praised as the only work that had given him precise and authentic ideas on the early history of Scotland. A month after Gibbon arrived in England for his last visit, he wrote to Pinkerton "in the most flattering terms" and engaged him in a project which, as he wrote, would not only fill a public need but also "wipe away those early prejudices and personal animosities which you have been perhaps too careless of provoking." Pinkerton accepted the reproof: "Too true," he commented: "*Peccavi.*"

In the course of "many conversations" the plan was drawn up. The work was to consist of ten or twelve folio volumes which were to be published by John Nichols,

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the bookseller and editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Gibbon declined to be general editor—his foreign residence alone made that impossible—but he agreed to sponsor and design the work, to give advice and assistance in detail, and to contribute to the expense by ordering at least six sets. He also undertook to write a preliminary prospectus, a general preface to the whole series, and a particular preface to each volume. For this purpose he planned, on his return to Lausanne, to read all the medieval English chronicles in order, "a labour," wrote Pinkerton, "which he mentioned with pleasure, as the last and most favourite occupation of his life." Meanwhile, he drafted the prospectus, which was to be published on January 20, 1794. In this prospectus he again compared his project with that of the French Benedictines and Muratori, and named Pinkerton as the editor. He admitted that there might be some prejudice against Pinkerton: "the impulse of a vigorous mind urged him at an early age to write and to print before his taste and judgment had attained to their maturity"; but he insisted that Pinkerton had both the learning and the energy to carry out the task: he was "one of the children of those Heroes whose race is almost extinct," who could carry out such a work single-handed. He could be the man who, so far, had been sought in vain, "the English Muratori."

Gibbon arranged to see Pinkerton again late in November 1793, but then he had to cancel the meeting, for he was in the hands of his surgeons: he was now undergoing his second operation within a few weeks. However, he invited Pinkerton to call on him immediately after the operation. Pinkerton probably did so, for soon afterward we find him in correspondence with Thomas Astle, the Keeper of the Records in the Tower, who expressed his admiration for "Mr. Gibbon's gigantic plan," adding, "I agree with him that you are the most proper person in England to execute it." However, within a month, Gibbon was again in need of surgery, and after a third operation he died on the very day on which his prospectus was due to be published. Lord Sheffield, his executor, found the draft in his papers and published it later, describing it as "a sketch interrupted by death."

"My good friend Gibbon is dead," Pinkerton wrote to the Scotch antiquary Lord Buchan, "and his plan has perished with him." For the plan, Pinkerton always insisted, was Gibbon's and his alone, and only Gibbon's name and patronage could have carried it through. Indeed, after Gibbon's death, Pinkerton questioned whether even that support would have been sufficient: "I doubted its success, even with his name"; "I never hoped for success in a design which government alone could carry into execution. It was solely his own project and has expired with him." Nichols, the proposed publisher, was equally defeatist. The insuperable difficulty, of course, was the cost. The Maurists had had the revenues of their order behind them, Muratori those of his prince; Gibbon had intended to rely on private subscriptions. After his death, such subscriptions could not be counted on. Besides, England was now at war with France. The great patrons were turning from literature to politics. So the ambitious project was dropped, and Pinkerton returned to the purely Scottish antiquarian interests which still entitle him to remembrance.

When the long war was, or seemed, over, Pinkerton did indeed seek to revive the project. In August 1814, when Napoleon was in Elba, he wrote a new prospectus, caused a hundred copies to be printed, and solicited the support of Lord Grenville, the former Whig prime minister. The plan, he explained, was still the same, even though it had been interrupted by "the unexpected death of Mr. Gibbon and the lengthened war of twenty-one years," and he himself, "the editor proposed by Mr. Gibbon," was "still anxiously desirous to carry it into effect." However, although Grenville expressed interest, the publisher, Mr. Longman, did not: "notwithstanding the powerful encouragement of Lord Grenville," he wrote to Pinkerton, his partners foresaw so much trouble that "they have declined to engage with you."

Undeterred, Pinkerton went higher still. He drew up a memorial to the Prince Regent himself. "The late celebrated Mr. Gibbon," he wrote, "had projected, in conjunction with the memorialist, the publication of all the ancient English historians in one regular series, they being now scattered in various dissimilar collections"; and once again he set

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out the plan. But once again he was doomed to disappointment. The Prince Regent, it seems, though a judicious patron of learning, was not impressed. Pinkerton's petition evidently received no reply.

That was the end of the project, as far as Pinkerton was concerned. Perhaps in his case there was a special reason for failure. Financially, he was now in deep water, and his attempt to revive the project may have been a gesture of desperation. By the end of the year, his creditors were pressing him and his days of learned literary work and correspondence were over. He disappears from the scene, and we last hear of him in Paris, a little old man, very thin, with green spectacles, who died there, as Sir Walter Scott would write, "in exile, in obscurity and, we fear, in indigence." However, the task that Gibbon had projected, and that Pinkerton could not sustain alone, did not sink with him. Three years after the end of the war we hear of it again; and although the persons involved were different, the scheme was recognizably the same; indeed there was a personal link with Gibbon. That personal link was George John, second Earl Spencer.

Lord Spencer was well known in his time as a patron of scholarship, a bibliophile, and a statesman. He had been carefully educated; his father had engaged as his tutor Sir William Jones, the famous Orientalist, who was also a classical scholar, a lawyer, and a poet. Jones was a close friend of Gibbon, who praised him in *The Decline and Fall*. In 1778, when Spencer, then Lord Althorp, was twenty, Jones proposed him as a member of "the Club"—that famous convivial and intellectual society immortalized by Johnson and Boswell. Jones's letter to him, describing the company which he was inviting him to join, is a well-known document in the history of the Club. At the Club, Spencer must have become familiar with Gibbon. In 1783, when he succeeded to the earldom and the family estates, he began to reorganize and improve the great library at Althorp, making it "the richest private collection in Europe." Two years later, Lord and Lady Spencer came to Lausanne, and Gibbon saw them "almost every day at my house or their own during their stay of a month." Lady Spencer also had cultivated tastes and was the friend of literary men. When in England, Gibbon was "in the habit of visiting Althorp," where he would occasionally "have a resolute intellectual conflict" with the Italian librarian Mr. Ocheda. During his last visit to England, he stayed at Althorp from October 20 to November 6, 1793—precisely the time when he was engaged in planning his project with Pinkerton. On his return to London, he dined twice with Lady Spencer's father, Lord Lucan. His last social engagement, unfulfilled owing to his death, was to be a dinner with Lord Lucan.

In view of their close friendship, and the intellectual interests of Lord Spencer—who was a founder and first president of the Roxburghe Club and served for forty years as a trustee of the British Museum—it seems inconceivable that "Mr. Gibbon's gigantic plan" was not discussed between them during that last fortnight at Althorp, or that Spencer was not keenly interested in it. But after Gibbon's death, any such interest must have been suspended. In that very year, Spencer became, first, a Privy Councillor, then ambassador to Vienna, then First Lord of the Admiralty. He held this last post for over six years—six very dramatic years during which Britain's naval supremacy in the world was created by the successive victories of Nelson. Indeed, it has been said that "for him, more distinctly perhaps than for any other English administrator, may be claimed the title of 'organiser of victory.' " Inevitably, in these circumstances, the medieval chronicles of England slid out of sight. As Pinkerton put it in his new prospectus of 1814, for the duration of the war "the attention of those eminent characters who can alone promote and patronise such a work was necessarily diverted to objects of a different nature."

When peace had finally returned, however, Lord Spencer resumed his old interest. In this he was assisted by an antiquary whom he had patronized and who was to him what Pinkerton had been to Gibbon. This was Henry Petrie, who had been introduced to Spencer by his bibliographical adviser, Thomas Frognal Dibdin. Spencer used Petrie's services and encouraged his researches, and about 1816 they revived Gibbon's project. By 1818 Spencer was ready to act. In that year, we are told, "a meeting of noblemen and gentlemen interested in historical literature and con-

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scious of the inadequacy of all previous attempts, was convened in Spencer House"—Lord Spencer's house in London—to consider the publication of the English records. This informal body "resolved to recommend to the government, through the Earl of Liverpool," the prime minister, "a complete collection of our annals and other historical documents," from the earliest times down to the Reformation. The project was duly taken up by the government, and in 1822 George IV, who as Prince Regent had ignored the plea of Pinkerton, now, as king, accepted a humble address of the House of Commons. The editor of the new series was, naturally enough, Petrie, who, through Spencer's patronage, had recently been appointed Keeper of the Records in the Tower. Petrie clearly saw himself as the direct successor of Pinkerton, engaged on the same project. The collection he prepared was entitled *Monumenta Historica Britannica*, and it was explicitly based, as Gibbon had suggested, on the *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France* of Dom Martin Bouquet.

Petrie's work was not published till 1848, after his death; but in the next decade, thanks to the energy of Petrie's pupil, Thomas Duffus Hardy, the movement which he had started gathered momentum, and from 1858 the great "Rolls Series" of "Chronicles and Memorials" began to appear: no fewer than 16 volumes in that first year and a total of 237 volumes in the forty years from 1858 to 1897. Such was the ultimate realization of Gibbon's plan to imitate, in England, the work of the Maurists and Muratori.

Thus Gibbon is not only the author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. He also made a mark in the study both of classical literature and of medieval English history. His first, juvenile work looks forward to the *Altertumswissenshaft* by which the classical scholars of nineteenth-century Germany deepened and transformed the interpretation of Greek and Roman letters. His last project, although at first frustrated by his death, similarly looks forward to the next century. Through Lord Spencer, it led to the great historical enterprise of nineteenth-century England, the publication, under the authority of the Master of the Rolls—for as Pinkerton had written, it really needed the patronage of government—of the documents and chronicles of medieval England.

My Friend Told Me

RICHARD FROST

He asked a child where the Lord was,
and the child tapped his own chest. He hadn't even
been told, my friend told me.
He hadn't even been told where the Lord was,
and he knew, said my friend.
And my friend bought a ticket from the child
for something the Church was having,
and he and the child said a prayer, their heads
together, and my friend left for Atlanta
and the greatest meeting of love he had wind of,
his eyes shining moist, the Lord beating his cup
on my friend's ribs, trying to get out for the holidays.

RICHARD FROST is the author of two books of poems: *The Circus Villains* and *Getting Drunk with the Birds*.

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The Most Disgusting of the Pronouns

JOHN CLIVE

"Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the war of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians as they warred against each other, beginning to write as soon as the war was on foot, with expectation it should prove a great one and most worthy the relation of all that had been before it." So reads the opening sentence of *The Peloponnesian War*, austerely cast in the third person. On the whole, twentieth-century historians have tended to range themselves in this Olympian tradition. To be sure, they do not customarily refer to themselves by name in the third person, in the manner of Thucydides and Julius Caesar. But they generally avoid what Edward Gibbon once called "the most disgusting of the pronouns." They use the editorial "we," or, less frequently, they adopt the chaste disguise of "the writer" or "the historian." The reasons lie partly in modesty, partly in the assumption that the ever-beckoning, though illusory, goal of "objectivity" is somehow fostered by an impersonal mode of writing—perhaps mainly in the conviction that good taste dictates distance between author and reader.

One is certainly startled, in reading Elie Halévy's great *History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, to find him suddenly—and very briefly—deserting the impersonal mode as he comes to deal with the effect on Londoners of the news of the unexpected reverses suffered by British troops during the opening phases of the Boer War (1899):

> I was in London. I remember seeing the troops on their way to the front marching through the streets amid the cheers of the crowd. I remember a few days later watching in the halls of clubs and in hotels the tape unroll its tidings of defeat. I can still see the old gentleman—obviously a retired army officer of superior rank—who threw himself on me, while I was reading the news, to ask in anxious tones "Have they come to blows?" And in the porch of the old War Office in Pall Mall I remember the little group whose composition was continually renewed, standing in front of the official list of dead and wounded. One evening when I was there it divided to let a carriage pass, at the back of which we caught a glimpse of Balfour, wearing a look of profound dejection; he was coming, like everyone else, in search of news.

An autobiographical intrusion of this sort is both unexpected and moving, and leads to reflections about the different ways in which some of the great historians since the eighteenth century have brought themselves explicitly into their histories. Gibbon is a case in point. It is in his footnotes, of course, that he lets his personality emerge in the most uninhibited manner. There we encounter an author who tells us that "I am not fond of repeating words like a parrot," and who does not hesitate to confide in us that "the portrait of Athanasius is one of the passages of my history with which I am the least dissatisfied." It is in a footnote that Gibbon, commenting on the report that Saint Bernard had piously closed his eyes to avoid looking at Lake Geneva, remarks: "To admire or despise St. Bernard as he ought, the reader, like myself, should have before the windows of his library the beauties of that incomparable landscape." And it is a footnote that contains what is probably the most self-revelatory passage in *The Decline and Fall*. Abdalrahman, a

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caliph of Spain, had found only fourteen days of happiness during his reign of more than half a century. Gibbon's comment on this runs as follows: "If I may speak of myself (the only person of whom I can speak with certainty), *my* happy hours have far exceeded, and far exceed, the scanty numbers of the caliph of Spain; and I shall not scruple to add, that many of them are due to the pleasing labor of the present composition." In yet another footnote the historian bids his memorable farewell to that heroically industrious critic and compiler of classical and ecclesiastical sources, Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont, on whom he has leaned for so long: "And here I must take leave for ever of that incomparable guide, whose bigotry is overbalanced by the merits of erudition, diligence, veracity, and scrupulous minuteness."

But Gibbon's use of the personal pronoun is by no means confined to his footnotes. He employs it not infrequently in the text itself to express his attitude toward the subject in hand. Thus: "I am impatient to pursue the final ruin of that Kingdom [of Burgundy]." "I have descanted with pleasure on the fortunate condition of Italy." "I enter with just diffidence on the subject of civil law." Furthermore, he unhesitatingly passes moral judgments in the first person: "Hypocrisy I shall never justify or palliate; but I will dare to observe that the odious vice of avarice is of all others most hastily arraigned, and most unmercifully condemned." As *The Decline and Fall* nears its end, Gibbon rightly assumes that his readers have by now become thoroughly familiar with his personality and his outlook on the world. Hence he can afford to mock himself—at one point expressing the far from pious hope that "I shall not, I trust, be accused of superstition"; at another, after recounting the feudal knight's pledge to spread truth as the champion of God and the ladies, adding the mock-apologetic phrase, "I blush to write such discordant names." We are far from surprised, then, that the majestic work ends on a personal note: "It was among the ruins of the Capitol that I first conceived the idea of a work which has amused and exercised near twenty years of my life, and which, however inadequate to my own wishes, I finally deliver to the curiosity and candor of the public."

If Gibbon ended his masterwork in the first person, Macaulay began his in the same way: "I propose to write the history of England from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is within the memory of men still living." But, apart from occasional guidepost sentences such as that at the opening of the famous third chapter—"I intend, in this chapter, to give a description of the state in which England was at the time when the Crown passed from Charles the Second to his brother"—he confined his explicitly personal remarks to the footnotes. Sir Walter Scott and the Romantic movement intervened between Gibbon and Macaulay. And Macaulay's comments in the first person serve a purpose different from any of Gibbon's—a purpose tied closely not only to the historian's pride in having personally visited and explored the locales of his history, but also to his desire to convey to his readers the sense of immediacy derived from oral tradition. Thus Macaulay's description of Monmouth's Rebellion includes the information that old persons related "very recently" that as children they were accustomed to play a war game of a fight between King James's and King Monmouth's men, and that the latter always raised the cry of "Soho!" Macaulay's footnote reads: "I learned these things from persons living close to Sedgemoor." It is Monmouth's burial place, Saint Peter's Chapel in the Tower of London, that draws another, closely related kind of personal expression from Macaulay—outright anger at the desecration of historical landmarks. "I cannot refrain," he writes in a footnote, "from expressing my disgust at the barbarous stupidity which has transformed this most interesting little church into the likeness of a meeting house in a manufacturing town."

Francis Parkman, another master of historical narrative, who also wrote under the impact of the Romantic movement but a generation later and in America, was more exercised over the spoliation of the natural American landscape than over the loss of historical monuments. But he shared Macaulay's obsession with place and local color. From his early youth he had traveled in the footsteps of the settlers and explorers of the New World, and his writings explicitly convey the mes-

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sage "I was there." Footnoting his description of the change that has occurred in the Illinois prairie landscape—from the dull green boundless pasture of buffalo and deer to yellow wheatfields dotted with the roofs of a "hardy and valiant yeomanry"—Parkman reports that "in 1840, a friend of mine shot a deer from the window of a farm-house, near the present town of La Salle." Another footnote, this one accompanying the depiction of a battle between Iroquois and Illinois in 1680, reads in part: "Being once in an encampment of Sioux when a quarrel broke out, and the adverse factions raised the war-whoop and began to fire at each other, I had a good, though for the moment a rather dangerous, opportunity of seeing the demeanor of Indians at the beginning of a fight."

Macaulay and Parkman, then, made use of the first person singular in order to persuade their readers that they had done their homework on the spot. Their personal testimony was intended to enliven and authenticate their historical narratives. Thomas Carlyle, often linked to them as yet another Romantic historian, went much further than that. The relation that he established between himself and his readers cast him not merely as a tourist guide, but in the combined role of instructor, preacher, and brother. "Ill stands it with me if I have spoken falsely," he wrote at the conclusion of *The French Revolution;* "thine also it was to hear truly. Farewell." And the *History of Frederick the Great* ends, "Adieu, good readers; bad also, adieu." With the historian playing such an explicitly pedagogical role, it should not occasion surprise to find Carlyle uninhibitedly personal in the expression of his views. "To me the Eighteenth Century has nothing grand about it," he announces right at the start of *Frederick*, "except that grand universal Suicide, named French Revolution, by which it terminated its otherwise most worthless existence with at least one worthy act;—setting fire to its old house and self, and going up in flames and volcanic explosions, in a truly memorable important manner. A very fit termination, as I thankfully feel, for such a Century."

Carlyle even goes so far as to address his subject, as well as his readers, personally. Writing of the siege of Weinsberg—from which the besieged wives emerged, according to the terms of capitulation, with their "most valuable property," each carrying her husband on her back—the historian breezily interjects, as if in conversation: "a Hohenzollern ancestor of yours, I think I have heard, was of the besieging party." But the most interesting and most novel aspect of Carlyle's self-intrusion into his work has to do with the way in which he takes the reader into his workshop where he lets him not only watch but participate in the historian's struggle with his sources, and in the resulting frustrations, defeats, and triumphs. Thus he describes the products of the Prussian Dryasdust school of historians: "I have often sorrowfully felt as if there were not in Nature, for darkness, dreariness, immethodic platitude, anything comparable to him [the Prussian Dryasdust]. He writes big Books wanting in almost every quality; and does not even give an *Index* to them. He has made of Friedrich's History a wide-spread, inorganic, trackless matter, dismal to your mind, and barren as a continent of Brandenburg sand!—Enough, he could do no other: I have striven to forgive him. Let the reader now forgive me; and think sometimes what probably my raw-material was!"

Upon that raw material Carlyle freely passes strictures in the first person whenever he deems that necessary. Thus: "Of this respectable Madame de Roucoulles, I have read, at least seven times, what the Prussian Books say of her by way of Biography; but it is always given in their dull tombstone style: it has moreover next to no importance; and I, alas, I do not yet too well remember it!" There is something uniquely instructive in being allowed to watch the historian labor with his raw materials in this fashion. There is also, as with so much else in Carlyle, something very modern about it. One of the predominant trends of our own times is that increasingly spectators, listeners, and readers expect to be more than passive observers of works of art and literature. If they cannot themselves participate in them, they want at the very least to be privy to the effects and methods that went into the making of those works. Carlyle deliberately accorded his readers that privilege.

In his *Old Regime and the French Revolution*, Tocqueville, too, takes the reader into

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his personal confidence as he adverts on occasion to his encounters with archival sources; more especially to those encounters which served to overturn his preconceptions. "I well remember my surprise," he reports, "when I was for the first time examining the records of an intendancy with a view to finding out how a parish was administered under the old order." Tocqueville was surprised because he had, up to that point, been convinced that the mode of local government of American rural townships was peculiar to the New World. Now he found those same features in the French parishes of the Old Regime—and for good reason, since the original model for both had been the rural parish of the Middle Ages. In similar fashion, he tells us that "I was almost startled"—a mind as sovereign as Tocqueville's was never startled without qualification—to find eighteenth-century bishops and abbots engaged in planning the construction of roads and canals; and that, in studying the *cahiers* drawn up by the three orders before the meeting of the Estates General, "I realized with something like consternation that what was being asked for was nothing short of the systematic, simultaneous abolition of *all* existing French laws and customs."

Rarely has a great historian been able to communicate so vividly the personal drama sometimes involved in historical research, and there is no doubt that Tocqueville's use of the first person singular enhances the dramatic quality of his account. His rigorously analytical mind and austere temperament make his personal interventions in the text all the more effective; the more so upon the occasions when he gives vent to his patriotic feelings. These feelings about the greatness of France and about certain elements in the French national character are far from uncritical, but no less charged with deep and genuine emotion. Perhaps his most moving tribute of this kind is one that this acute and profound critic of the French Revolution and its effects pays to the unselfish idealism of those who made that revolution in the first place. "Much of my life," Tocqueville writes, "has been devoted to the study of history and I have no hesitation in affirming that never in the course of my studies have I discovered a revolution in which, anyhow to begin with, so many men displayed a patriotism so intense, such unselfishness, such real greatness of mind." Looking at the French Revolution not as an isolated phenomenon but in the light of the events preceding it, and keeping in mind the peculiarities of the Old Regime and of the French temperament, Tocqueville declares at the end of his book: "I find the nation itself far more remarkable than any of the events in its long history. It hardly seems possible that there can ever have existed any other people so full of contrasts and so extreme in all their doings, so much guided by their emotions and so little by fixed principles, always behaving better, or worse, than one expected of them."

Such fervent patriotic sentiments inevitably remind us of another historian of the French Revolution, a fellow countryman and contemporary of Tocqueville's—Jules Michelet. Like Tocqueville, who found in the French revolutionaries the sort of civic virtue not much in evidence in France at the time of his writing (1856), Michelet, in his *History of the French Revolution* (1847), contrasts the Frenchmen of his day with those of the early revolutionary period: "When I think of the times that followed, of our own time, so listless and self-seeking, I cannot help wondering that extreme misery did not in the least dispirit this people, nor drew from them one regret for their ancient slavery." But if Michelet resembles Tocqueville in this respect, he goes considerably further than the latter—or, indeed, than any other great historian—in the explicit linkage he constructs between his own personal history and the historical period about which he is writing.

One gets an immediate sense of how closely bound up history and autobiography were in Michelet's work in the preface to his *French Revolution*, where he tells us that his father died just as he, the son, was attempting to depict the fall of the Bastille: "When that blow fell upon me, I was lost in contemplation. I was elsewhere, hastily realizing this work, so long the object of my meditation. I was at the foot of the Bastille, taking that fortress, and planting our immortal banner upon its towers. That blow came upon me, unforeseen, like a shot from the Bastille." Analogies between Michelet's intimate personal life and his historical writing are by no means confined to the prefatory pages of his

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work. If they were, they would resemble the approach of many other historians, past and present, who, while keeping their principal text impersonal, are willing to put themselves more directly into their introductory remarks. But that is hardly the way of this historian, who said of himself, "I move across history like the Greek actor who, when playing Electra, bore the funeral urn of his son." The past offers personal solace, inspiration, a guide to action: "Whilst I have been writing these lines [on the prisoners in the Bastille] a mountain, a Bastille has been crushing my breast. Alas! Why stay so long talking of dilapidated prisons, and wretches whom death has delivered? The world is covered with prisons, from Spielberg to Siberia, from Spandau to Mont-St.-Michel. The world is a prison!"

Michelet would have shaken his head in wonderment at our current discussions as to whether the past is or is not "usable." As far as he was concerned, the whole point of writing history was to re-create a past that not only could, but must, be used—eventually by the historian's readers, but in the first place by the historian himself—to satisfy his own psychic and spiritual needs, and to inspire him both to bear witness to past virtues and to do his share in the rooting out of present evils. For Michelet, writing history is tantamount to self-expression, to total commitment at the most personal level. When he has finished describing the pure patriotic fervor that marked the festival of village federations celebrating the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, Michelet gives vent to his feelings in the very words used on that occasion by the members of one such federation: "Thus ended the happiest day of our life." That sentence, the historian tells us, "I was very near writing myself in concluding this chapter. It is ended, and nothing like it is in store for me. I leave here an irreparable moment of my life, a part of myself, which, I plainly feel, will remain here and accompany me no more: I seem to depart poor and needy."

Enough has been said to show that twentieth-century historians too timid to introduce themselves into their histories need have no qualms about a lack of less timid but nonetheless distinguished predecessors. One who has had no such qualms is Martin Duberman, whose recent history of Black Mountain College exemplifies his conviction that "when a historian allows more of himself to show—his feelings, fantasies and needs, not merely his skills at information-retrieval, organization, and analysis—he is *less* likely to contaminate the data, simply because there is less pretense that he and it are one." By no means would all of his colleagues agree with that view. But it would be difficult to argue that the insertion of self on the part of some of the great historians of the modern period has harmed, rather than enhanced, the worth or reputation of their works. For his part, the author of this essay—or, I suppose I should now say I myself—will certainly think twice henceforth before preaching the virtue of never employing "the most disgusting of the pronouns" to students of history and historical writing.

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POETRY

Rome: A Meditation on Keats

ALFRED KAZIN

John Keats died in this house on February 23, 1821, aged twenty-five and four months. He had been here since November 1820, growing gradually worse after a debilitating journey from England that had taken almost three months and whose last stage, from Naples in a barbarous carriage, had further provoked and exhausted him as he jolted and bounced his way to Rome while his companion, the painter Joseph Severn, cheerfully grew healthier walking beside the carriage for the last part of the journey.

Dying in this house, knowing all too well that he was dying, having known since his hemorrhage just a year before that he was doomed—"I know that blood, it is arterial," he had said, recognizing his death warrant—Keats experienced an agony of total frustration, a sense of oncoming nullity as a man, a poet, a lover, whose stabbing despair in his last letters can still shake us with Keats's particularly rapid, gyrating expressiveness of sensations. "O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts!" he had written in those early joyful letters of his violently accelerated self-discovery as a poet. Now he was dying by sensations, dying to sensations. With his great gift both for enumerating everything he felt, and for getting some general principle and aspect of human thought out of what he had learned about himself through his sensations, Keats felt as "annihilated"—to use one of his characteristic words—as a man can feel while still in the flesh.

To his distrusted friend Charles Brown, who had failed him at the last by not accompanying him to Italy, and whom he suspected of flirting cynically with Fanny Brawne, Keats wrote from Rome on November 30, 1820: "I have an habitual feeling of my real life having past, and that I am leading a posthumous existence. God knows how it would have been—but it appears to me—however, I will not speak of that subject . . . I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any hand writing of a friend I love so much as I do you. . . .There is one thought enough to kill me—I have been well, healthy, alert &c, walking with her—and now—the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach. . . . I am well disappointed in hearing good news from George—for it runs in my head we shall all die young. . . ."

The seeming disjointedness of Keats when ill is of course very much like the headlong mental excitement of Keats's letters in the great years 1817–19 when he was striking off his great insights about Shakespeare, the character of genius, and Wordsworth to his brothers, to Woodhouse, to Benjamin Bailey, from the merest morsel of reading. But now, dying in Rome at twenty-five, his extraordinarily spontaneous, living, brilliantly abrupt way of dancing his way from item to item of his experience becomes the most chilling enumeration of his steady annihilation.

This was an avidly sensual young man—"Mister John Keats five feet high"—who made up for his five feet by his passionate eagerness to lap up all of life. Everything to do with the body was of special, sometimes morbid, importance to him. His mother, his brother Tom, and his brother George in America were all to die of tuberculosis; his father had died in the prime of life after an

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accident; Keats had been trained as a medical assistant, had performed dissections and operations. He had whored about in the company of exuberantly free, radical-minded litterateurs and editors in the still-heady air of pre-Victorian England. Wonderfully free to roam what were still country districts in and just out of London, to take enormous walking trips into the Lake Country and Scotland, to splash all his senses about, as he felt, in what was still England's green and pleasant land, he had become a poet in and through his senses—at the late age of nineteen—exactly with the emergence of his conscious sexual energy.

Keats the body poet, the sexual poet, opting for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts, moving between ecstasy and annihilation, seeking transcendence in and through the body, explains why his every mental adventure as a poet was a matter of feeling it, as he said, upon his pulses. The peculiar excitement of Keats's great letters and poems, even of the diffuseness in *Endymion* that he compares to a scattered pack of cards, is a sexual excitement made up even more of *wonder* at what he feels than of pleasure and pride. Geography for Keats has come down to the body rather than to the world. He reads the world *from* his body. Early, middle, and late, as we say so amazedly about a poet whose actual writing spanned less than six years, Keats was peculiarly vibrant. He clung to every possible reverberation in his own mind of the light and shade, heat and cold, manifested through *his* sensations. No wonder that Keats's total output can remind us of a fever chart in severe illness—with the slow rise to some frightening but totally expressive peak in the great odes—and then the dying away, literally, to the exhaustion of the body and the senses.

It is the physicality of Keats's poetry, the allegory it expresses of our own emergence, maturation, and decline, that explains why Keats has been important to our time as a life in poetry rather than as an influence on the practice of poetry. To this must be added his intense agnosticism. Keats's style was artificial even in his own time. It was disliked by Byron, patronized by Wordsworth and Shelley. Keats's adherence to what Gibbon had properly called "the thin texture of the pagan mythology . . . interwoven with various but not discordant materials," like his constant invocation of what he still called "poesy," stems not just from his casual reading, on an education entirely in English (and depending on hearsay), but from his ready skepticism as regards Christianity.

Blake's "paganism"—the word expresses his physicality rather than his brilliant philosophy of life realized exclusively through the self rather than from intellectual tradition—is amazingly deep-seated by contrast with the other great Romantics. Blake was an independent religious mind tortured by his need for a total new grammar of human history in its relation with the divine. Shelley was a natural and of course educated classicist who opted for the Devil's party and knew it—for Prometheus rather than Zeus. Wordsworth had a well-recognized genius for drawing a sustainedly general Christian pantheism out of every rock and rill in the Lake Country.

Keats was a libertarian radical who happened not to be that much interested in politics. His own philosophy is that "Essential Beauty," as he called it, drawn by art alone out of natural existence, is enough for him. Art, as many an early twentieth-century modernist would have said—but with not as much courage as Keats displayed in a more hidebound period—is what makes life tolerable tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. At its best, like its obvious affinity in physical sex, it becomes a model of attachment and even of ecstasy.

Keats's theme of expressiveness, though it may call on the gods for inspiration and fortitude, is a world of forms, not of beliefs. Man is alone on earth with the resources allowed him by blind fortune. The poet or oracle of the new knowledge to be won by poetry is not a priest, as even the aboundingly physical Whitman thought, but, in Keats's marvelous image, like a soldier walking up to a battery. Keats of course shares in the romantic cult of genius that went on and on in the nineteenth century and became in Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, Shaw the typical idea of the writer educating necessary opinion by the irresistible momentum of his demands on the future. Without the belief in genius as repeating God's work on earth—the poet, as more than

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any king, the deputy of God in the endlessness of creation—this son of a livery-stable-keeper, a mere medical assistant far to the rear of English society—could not have come to his fiery greatness in one single year.

But Keats does not believe in traditional religion. He does not even believe that there is a tradition prior to and greater than each "individual Man of Achievement." Jesus, he says, was like the "seldom-appearing Socrates"—"a man by whose persistent endeavors mankind may be made happy—I can imagine such happiness carried to an extreme." There is a grand march of intellect, he wrote on May 3, 1818, and that proves "that a mighty providence subdues the mightiest minds to the service of *the time being*, whether it be in human knowledge or religion."

In the most famous of his self-discoveries through an act of criticism, he pronounced his ideal in Shakespeare's profusion, variousness, and inconsistency.

> Hempstead, Sunday, 22 December 1818, My dear Brothers—Brown and Dilke walked with me & back from the Christmas pantomime . . . several things dovetailed in my mind, & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed enormously—I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason—Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge. This pursued through Volume would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.

Now it is possible to admit the rightness of this and nevertheless credit it to a young poet's realization of what is right for him and not for Coleridge—especially when it was also right for Shakespeare. But contracted as Keats's progress was into certain tearing moments of insight, we have to understand Keats's metaphysical courage, his grim refusal of religious consolation, in order to understand more fully why, when he was dying in this house, his greatest despair was that his full gift had not been and might not be recognized. Some writer once said ruefully that other people judge us by what we have written, while we judge ourselves by what we are planning to write. Keats, to adapt the extraordinary image used by Herman Melville about his own swift and somehow killing development in *his* twenties, had come to the inmost leaf—and was, like Melville, "ready to be annihilated."

But Keats was not morbid like Melville, who in any event lived into his seventies (probably because he never again tried anything on the order of *Moby Dick*). Keats was a casualty of tuberculosis, his guardian's financial selfishness, and mismanagement—and of his understandable fear of curtailment as a man and poet. He was held to this slender margin of existence. That is why his belief that genius does not so much instruct as "operate" is important to understanding his frame of mind at the end. To Benjamin Bailey, on November 22, 1817, he had written: "Men of Genius are great as certain ethereal Chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral intellect—but they have not any individuality, any determined Character."

The refrain that genius has no individuality is most vibrantly contained in the letter to Woodhouse of October 22, 1818: ". . . the poetical character is not itself,—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—. . . What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the chameleon Poet.—" This was crucial to Keats: identity came through the work, through repeated acts that had no significance except as the experience of renewal. No dependably continuous Christian or even classical tradition, no future life except as an image of oneself in the great body of memory—Keats certainly held out for that.

"That which is creative must create itself." And only this Shakespearean conception of a writer's career as a discontinuous series of creative acts can explain why Keats could have found faith and hope in so "personal" a philosophy of greatness. Matthew Arnold did not mean this when, at the height of Keats's rediscovery in the Victorian period, he piously breathed: "He is—he is with Shakespeare." Keats's own brinkmanship, his dominant trait of mobility, the courage to accept mobility, discontinuity, the great flashes of Essential Beauty as the truest life we have on earth—these must often have

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seemed not much to hold on to when he was losing life itself at twenty-five. And hence his bitterness of a kind unknown to the other Romantics, as sexual as it was fame-obsessed. To lead a "posthumous existence," as he vehemently put it, was nothing to a man whose first book had been savagely attacked in the quarterlies, and whose dramatic genius in his second—*The Eve of St. Agnes*, the great odes, *Lamia*, *The Fall of Hyperion*—would be far less appreciated than the pathos in his final struggle and his gift for inspiring Tennyson and Arnold with seemingly "divine" moments of realization.

Keats was indeed badly misread by his contemporaries. Even those to whom he felt closest for political reasons—the airily radical Leigh Hunt, the Hazlitt obstinately pro-French Revolution and Napoleon—patronized him. The gorgeous mistake that made possible *Adonais*—the assumption that Keats had been destroyed by some critics—was again as patronizing as Byron's sneer in *Don Juan* that a fiery particle had been snuffed out by an article. Carlyle, born the same year as Keats, said with his usual brutal contempt for worldly failure that "Keats was a miserable creature, hungering after sweets which he can't get."

Yet even when Keats became an idol in the Victorian period that would have been his natural lifetime, he became an excuse for overromanticizing his own life, a figure in the Anglo-American literary opera in which the young hero chokes out his life in the last act, like Mimi or Camille—deserted by a faithless Fanny Brawne. To anyone who grew up on Eng. Lit.—Amy Lowell's unconsciously indecent lust to possess helpless John Keats, some teacher's half-tearful recitation of *Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty,—that is all/Ye know on earth and all ye need to know* as the ultimate wisdom—it was somehow no comfort that the next generation would see brilliant critical biographies and studies—Walter Bate, Aileen Ward, Robert Giddings, Christopher Ricks, Lionel Trilling. These somehow did not affect the practice and theory of contemporary *poets*. Eliot said wonderful things about Keats as a new stage in human consciousness, but Keats did not affect Hardy or Hopkins any more than he was to affect *Prufrock*, *Sunday Morning*, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, *The Death of the Hired Man*, *Song of Myself*, or "Because I Could Not Stop for Death, Death Kindly Stopped for Me."

Where indeed *was* Keats in the modern poetry that began with the Romantics and, as we have never seen more clearly than today, is sustained by Blake and Wordsworth? The question was important because Keats, absent as he was from the later poetry, occupied so much of our consciousness; he *was*, he *is*, so much an active and continuing delight that it is startling to think that the dominating naturalness and even jauntiness of twentieth-century style might have found him luscious and stagy, the human stance in his poetry too passive, poignant, and exclamatory. Yeats said haughtily that Keats was "like a boy with his face pressed to a sweetshop window." It is possible that the several brilliant biographies of Keats in recent years, the emphasis on Keats's letters and on the active spirit of his short life, while correcting the bias against Keats's "softness," have also been ways of bypassing the problems presented to the practice of poetry by the artificiality in Keats's poetic diction and by his reliance, even for his cast of characters, on a mythology both stilted and unsure. So much of modern poetry came out of the desire to redress the late Victorian fanciness in favor of a flat natural voice, that Keats's can still seem just too ceremonial—*How many bards gild the lapses of time! A few of them have ever been the food/Of my delighted fancy,—I could brood/Over their beauties, earthly, or sublime. . . .* Or: *Spangling those million poutings of the brine/With quivering ore: 'twas even a awful shine/From the exaltation of Apollo's bow. . . .*

This is early Keats. Even his mature style, mixed from the same gold leaf, can remind us of the grand style that Wordsworth, almost in the year of Keats's birth, had punctured for all time in the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. But the real problem for the modern poet is that Keats does believe that the task of the poet is to portray himself *mastering* his own experience. One great discovery of modern poetry is that the poet need not do anything of the kind. The poem must work, but it does not follow that the poet is or should be the hero of his solitary quest. Hardy—whose

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quiet, sometimes hopeless Dorset voice seems more and more essential than the strained brilliance of Hopkins—pointed the way in his love poems by commemorating a series of urgently disjointed encounters, of the human mind as a fluid corridor packed with couples who constantly failed to recognize each other in time. *Prufrock,* which far more directly expressed Eliot's real anguish, sexual sterility, than *The Waste Land,* remains sixty years later the archetypal poem of what Rilke called the past that breaks out in our hearts. Modern poetry, like modern painting, has for too long been influenced by itself. Long ago, Eliot's artfully broken voice, with its stealthy subconscious persona, became our academic tradition.

So Keats, who in poem after poem does indeed walk like a soldier up to the battery, and as regularly gets mown down, presents us with another, older idea entirely: the poet openly one with his life, style as affirmation, experience as a problem to be solved, life as full possibility, Homer and Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton looking down upon him as he writes, challenging him to join them in the company of the immortal dead. "Poesy" or ceremonial style translates everything into costume: bards, Apollo, Titans versus Olympians, a golden pen, a hymning angel.

> *Yes, I will be thy priest and build a fane*
> *In some untrodden region of my mind . . .*

As Byron said wickedly of even the great Nightingale Ode, why the *true* Hippocrene? How in the world, we ask ourselves when we read Keats through after having tasted him in our youth, did this skeptical medical student, this admirer of Hazlitt's fierce radicalism, come to rely on such a cast of outworn actors as Endymion, Diana, Hyperion, and even that Grecian urn?

But this was precisely the poetic machinery that was around for a radical empiricist who was a poet self-educated by poetry and whose gift for making the most of every experience was so intense that it mattered no more to him where he borrowed his characters and plots than it did to Shakespeare. He did, let us admit it, think that "poesy" required the poet to walk on his toes in court step. Suddenly discovering himself as a poet at nineteen, sometimes confused by histrionic characters like Leigh Hunt, distracted by his own powerful gift for sheer enjoyment, he is timid, playful, tentative. Pretending to be less serious than he is, he is self-conscious *eloquently:* one must be eloquent in every line and always at the same pitch. He has not grown up with poetry; he does not have a poetic tradition of his own, as even the totally idiosyncratic Blake did. Like a Sunday painter, Keats the beginner is intent on making beauty. He does not yet know what a secret and a surprise writing can be to the writer himself. But he is not long in finding out. "19 Feb 1818: Many have original minds who do not think it—they are led away by Custom— . . . Now it appears to me that almost any Man may like the Spider spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel. . . . Man should not dispute or assert but whisper results to his neighbor." The key moment had come earlier, November 22, 1817—"the simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent Working coming continually on the spirit with a fine suddenness."

From here on, the master words for Keats are *presses, seizes, abrupt, suddenness, draught;* or as he put it, the *authenticity* of the imagination. What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth. The poet discovers that he can write, and write at any time, to any length, as in the four thousand lines and more of *Endymion;* that he can imitate, parody, extend himself in this rhetorical country of mythology because he trusts the sequences of his own mind. This is what moves his excited identification with Shakespeare's ability to create an Iago as gladly as an Imogen. Keats now has such self-confidence that he can rate Wordsworth over Milton because Wordsworth "thinks into the human heart," yet mock Wordsworth as "the egotistical sublime."

Now Keats comes into his own—and the drama of reading him emerges as Keats's mind working itself out through (and sometimes despite) the formal occasion set up by him. Formal indeed: the poet faces his theme as a priest the altar. There is invocation, high ceremony. But even more there is a contest of strength and wit, Jacob wrestling with the angel. The subject can be subdued but must

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not be absorbed entirely into the poet as his only protagonist. (So much "radical self-hood" is modernism.) Keats moves close to this in the identification with the nightingale. But the immense journey we take in reading that poem represents something else, classic in its own right. The stages by which we move from line to line keep their mystery every time we read the poem; we feel that there is a mind behind the mind, following the nightingale and tracing its echoes in the mind that presents itself to us as writing the poem.

April, 1819. We begin in the unexplained middle of things, in a complicated human heart that aches, whose sense is pained by a *drowsy numbness*, as though of *hemlock I had drunk,/Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains/One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk;/'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot*, he says *to* the nightingale, *But being too happy in thine happiness,—/That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,/In some melodious plot/Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,/Singest of summer in full-throated ease.* The physical exactness here keys us up even though the theme is aesthetic pain. "When I first heard two-part harmony in Bach," said Schweitzer, "I thought I would faint from excess of pleasure." The excess of pleasure is surely what accounts for the minutely tuned adjectives: *shadows numberless, beechen green, full-throated ease, drowsy numbness, dull opiate;* above all for the abrupt surprise and intermediacy of style—*But being too happy in thine happiness—/That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,/In some melodious plot/Of beechen green and shadows numberless,/Singest of summer in full-throated ease.*

In stanza 2, the sudden longing for *a draught of vintage, . . ./Cool'd a long age in the deep-delv'd earth*, shifts us into a dream fantasy of intoxicating plenty. The theme is the northerner's irresistible dream of the Mediterranean—*Dahin!*—and each line in itself expresses Keats's belief that he could identify with any object, even a billiard ball in its smoothness and roundness. *O for a beaker full of the warm South,/Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,/With beaded bubbles winking at the brim/And purple-stained mouth. . . . But now the reversal* into dream, into death as another existence: *That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,/And with thee fade far away into the forest dim.*

Death is the mother of Beauty, said Wallace Stevens in *Sunday Morning*, another poem of natural existence without illusion but on the margin of hallucination. I think of this as I come to the echolalic repetitions of *Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget/What thou among the leaves hast never known,/The weariness, the fever, and the fret/Here, where men sit and hear each other groan. . . .* The firmness of style, the ringing alliteration, the luminous images of a whole cycle of life are in the most wonderful contrast to the exhaustion pictured.

And now the dream takes over—*Away! Away! for I will fly to thee*—the poet has willed his way into the dream *on the viewless wings of Poesy*, and *Though the dull brain perplexes and retards*, the growing faith that Imagination can be Truth has taken Keats into the heart of the mystery that had first seized him five years before: *Already with thee! tender is the night,/And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,/Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays; . . .*

Here, he says, *there is no light/ . . . I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,/. . . But in embalm'd darkness, guess each sweet/Wherewith the seasonable month endows/The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild. . . .* The passage is into enchantment, onto a plateau of steady sexual delight. The sensations are of the world as another body. And they are all of a piece, without the breaking disillusion at the beginning of the poem and at the end. He has been carried over completely, and we are carried over by images that are not epithets for the things, as in *Endymion*, but are the thing itself—*The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;/White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;/Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;/ And mid-May's eldest child,/The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,/The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.*

But from here on, Beauty becomes the mother of Death—as so often sexual repletion and depletion bring lovers a sense of death. *Darkling I listen . . .* in those words Keats describes a fall into another consciousness,

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alone, the margin of annihilation that has been his demon, but now seems all too tempting: *for many a time/I have been half in love with easeful Death,/Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme, . . . Now more than ever seems it rich to die,/To cease upon the midnight with no pain,/While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad/In such an ecstasy! . . .*

Yet still he can pull back: for the song itself has become an absolute, a stunning transcendence of the mortal condition: . . . *No hungry generations tread thee down;/The voice I hear this passing night was heard/In ancient days by emperor and clown;/Perhaps the self-same song that found a path/Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,/She stood in tears amid the alien corn. . . .* The song is now openly seen as the voice of poetry alone—*The same that oft-times hath/Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam/Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.* But now the song and the poet divide—poetry is an ecstasy that can enchant, drug, create, but cannot redeem our mortal condition. *Forlorn! the very word is like a bell/To toll me back from thee to my sole self!/Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well/As she is famed to do, deceiving elf/Adieu! Adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades/Past the near meadows, over the still stream,/Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep/In the next valley glades:/Was it a vision, or a waking dream?/Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?*

No other Romantic poet was to go so far into the dream absolute on a purely natural basis—without Coleridge's drugs, without Blake's wholly spiritualized universe, without Wordsworth's natural piety, without Shelley's illusion that Prometheus will make war on Father Zeus for *our* sake. No other Romantic poet was to divide life from death, death from life, so absolutely *within* himself—and all this within the letters of fire that are the style of John Keats.

Rome, November 30, 1820: "Yet I ride the little horse—and, at my worst, even in quarantine, summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year of my life. There is one thought enough to kill me—I have been well, healthy, alert, &c, walking with her—and now—the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach."

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Books

The Group and the Salon

LEON EDEL

THE LETTERS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF (Virginia Stephen), 1888–1912. *Edited by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $14.95.*

THE LOVING FRIENDS: A PORTRAIT OF BLOOMSBURY. *By David Gadd. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $6.95.*

THE BLOOMSBURY GROUP. *Edited by S. P. Rosenbaum. University of Toronto Press. $25. Paper, $10.*

OTTOLINE AT GARSINGTON: THE MEMOIRS OF LADY OTTOLINE MORRELL, 1915–1918. *Edited by Robert Gathorne-Hardy. Knopf. $12.50.*

OTTOLINE. THE LIFE OF LADY OTTOLINE MORRELL. *By Sandra Jobson Darroch. Coward MacGann & Geoghagan. $12.50.*

My own memories of topographical Bloomsbury are those of a young student reading at the British Museum and living for a while in bed-and-breakfast lodgings in certain of the shabby streets of that portion of London: rows of houses once splendid, now dingy, with slanting ceilings in the upper rooms, a shilling slot for gas that provided little heat in old dusty fireplaces, a bed stand, a bowl and pitcher of water, a chamber pot, and a toilet tucked away somewhere on a stair landing much as the Victorians tucked away so much of their private world. One left these rooms to wander in streets around the British Museum, with the old ABCs, all buns and tea, or a Lyons house, bookshops, curiosity shops, neighborhood stores—but also, in the same area, large umbrageous squares with fine old houses. That is the Bloomsbury landscape of my memories. Its human landscape is now the subject of a growing library of books. Spacious Gordon or Fitzroy or Tavistock Squares are very human indeed, endowed with the name of "Bloomsbury" in quotation marks, to denote the group of highly individualized friends who lived in this part of London in the years before and during the First World War. They gave to literature, to art, to economics, to criticism, and to political activism a high stamp of originality and modernity. We cannot talk of a "modern movement" in Britain without bringing up the names of Keynes in economics; Virginia Woolf in the novel; Vanessa Bell, Roger Fry, and Duncan Grant in art; and Lytton Strachey in biography. The group also had its two critics, Clive Bell in art and Desmond MacCarthy in literature, and its political committeeman and publisher, also a critic and writer, Leonard Woolf.

"Bloomsbury" has thus become a term more human than geographical and, in our time at least, is associated with this particular group that always denied it was a group. Human Bloomsbury had other meanings as well: a parcel of snobs, some said, and also a bunch of pacifists; perpetrators of hoaxes on the British Navy, possessed of a chronic desire, when young, to *épater les bourgeois*. In the Edwardian days, when life was beginning to loosen up in London after the long nineteenth-century grayness, the Bloomsbury characters rubbed many the wrong way. They defied convention. Their happy bohemianism was

LEON EDEL, biographer of Henry James and editor of his letters, is also editor of the Edmund Wilson papers. Citizens Professor of English at the University of Hawaii, he is writing a book on Bloomsbury.

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"All books are divisible into two classes: the books of the hour, and the books of all time."–John Ruskin

JOHN RUSKIN
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Robert Hewison
Ruskin's greatest strength is that he treats the condition of art and the condition of society as equally significant. He is one of the masters of English prose; and yet he can be confusing to the modern reader. Hewison's new study shows that the key to understanding his thought lies in the visual quality of his mind: His ability to see with an artist's eye. "Brilliant and invigorating . . . reveals the coherence underlying Ruskin's tragic life and his contribution as Victorian art critic, writer, and social prophet."
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paralleled in America by that of Greenwich Village, but without the alcohol, the speakeasy, the peculiar Manhattan provinciality. Some of the Bloomsbury audacities consisted in emphasizing painters who filled London with either laughter or rage: Cézanne, who couldn't draw straight and used odd colors, or the color-mad Fauves, or Picasso, who dismembered bodies and put faces out of joint. The fragmented realities of the post-impressionists and the dream fantasies of the surrealists were brought to London by Bloomsbury. And then there was Lytton Strachey with his double voice, basso and squeak, and his biographical aggressions; and Virginia Woolf's brilliant mocking style and her novels that went against the grain of the British storytelling tradition. As for the painters—well, they were like painters all over the world; all they seemed to care about was their painting—Virginia's sister Vanessa, beautiful and bold, the quick-minded Roger Fry, oldest of the group, the gentle, passive Duncan Grant, the group's last survivor (at this writing past his ninetieth year).

This brief sketch seems straightforward enough, but there are problems. To understand the books about Bloomsbury now pouring from the presses we must refer back to an older book whose influence continues to shape the public vision of certain posthumous reputations: Michael Holroyd's life of Lytton Strachey. Holroyd's errors in taste and judgment, his curiously unliterary perspective, his failure to understand the nature of art and artists can be explained in part by his immaturity. He was still in his twenties when he was given access to the massive archive of Lytton Strachey, who never discarded anything. His biography is crammed with Strachey juvenilia and is totally confined to Strachey's view of his friends and the world. Strachey had a great deal of boyish fun in him; he was eccentric and amusing, but his judgment of others was prickly, as might be expected, and tinged by his rampant homosexuality. The biographer accepted his vision as if it were fact, and fixed for too long the picture of Bloomsbury's men as gamboling satyrs spending a lifetime of weekends, and its women, notably Virginia Woolf, as wraiths. Also, the book gathered in under the umbrella of Bloomsbury a great many friends, and friends of friends, and casual loves, and acquaintances as if they were a part of the original creative group. The consequence has been a historical jumble that can only be remedied gradually.

In this historical confusion, Lady Ottoline Morrell is constantly referred to as belonging to Bloomsbury simply because she was, on certain occasions, hostess to some of its members. Lady Ottoline in reality created a distinctive world of her own that bore no resemblance to Bloomsbury. She conducted a salon. She was an English Madame Récamier. She entertained in the grand manner. She had a passion for art and artists. Her ducal heritage of noblesse oblige (she was sister of the duke of Portland) and her vivid personality were characterized by the young Virginia Stephen, later Woolf: "We have just got to know a wonderful lady Ottoline Morrell who has the head of a Medusa; but she is very simple and innocent in spite of it and worshipful of the arts." This goes to the heart of the noble lady—she was a grand innocent. Her flashing eyes and salient chin, her extravagant dress and public gestures, were the facades of a woman of perception and feeling. Like Bloomsbury itself, she has been caricatured out of recognition. She gathered around her many great persons and a certain number of fools and sycophants—a malady common to great salon-keepers. One has only to read the light verses of William Plomer, a sensitive observer of both Lady Ottoline and Bloomsbury, to receive a picture:

> . . . slowly into the sunlight sailed
> Lady Ottoline, *en grand tenue*, holding herself
> as proudly as a rare goose swims;
> she was swimming away from the grand and dull,
> herself, as ever, too grand to conform.

And he goes on to describe how, on her right, "her long boned hand rested on Bertrand Russell's arm"—

> On her left, poised on legs
> without precedent, Nijinsky himself—
> poised as if he could prance for ever
> without a thought of any curtain fall.

These verses brush in the suggestive details that the books now published fill out. Ottoline's love affair with Bertrand Russell was

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complex: that of an intellectual—one of the great mathematical minds of our century—with a woman at once romantic, sentimental, and deeply intuitive. Ottoline was not so much in love with the egotistical Russell as with his "mind." She had married Philip Morrell, a "square" member of Parliament, heir to a beer fortune, an ardent pacifist (and pacifism demanded a great deal of courage during the First World War). In gathering around her Nijinsky, Gertler, Augustus John, D. H. Lawrence, Dora Carrington, the eccentric Dorothy Brett, and Aldous Huxley—from the ephemeral and more permanent of art—she also welcomed Strachey, Clive Bell, and Desmond MacCarthy, the "worldly" members of Bloomsbury. They liked idle talk and gossip. The world of Lady Ottoline was that of Huxley's *Point Counter Point* or Henry James's *The Sacred Fount,* not that of *The Waves*. These novels help define the profound differences between Bloomsbury and Garsington.

Bloomsbury was Cambridge; it came out of that university. It was disciplined, brilliant, articulate, sophisticated, not interested in the more superficial amenities or the vampire styles of Garsington Manor. The friends of Bloomsbury all had a similar philosophy of life, and their interests were dispersed among the creative artistic and political movements of the time. Leonard Woolf had been an expert colonial administrator; Roger Fry had had a season at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and (strange thought) had had to deal with American tycoons like J. P. Morgan. In Bloomsbury there was love and marriage and there were affairs *hetero* and *homo*. During the war of 1914–18 its center shifted from Gordon Square to Charleston Manor, an old farmhouse in Sussex where Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant presided, painted, and reared the young, and where some of Bloomsbury's conscientious objectors could farm in lieu of military service.

Two particular personages need sorting out as between the salon and the group: Dora Carrington, who was distinctly of the Strachey circle, and Vita Sackville-West, who belonged to the later world of Virginia Woolf. Carrington was the strange heroine of the Strachey drama, a mischievous, childlike Slade-school painter, a creature of practical jokes and caricature, often unpleasant and nasty. She looked in at Lady Ottoline's and sometimes came to Gordon Square, but mainly devoted herself to Lytton Strachey, arranging his complex surroundings to suit their own odd combination of her lesbianism and his homosexuality. Vita's friendship with Virginia Woolf in the 1920s endured long enough to inspire *Orlando*. Her seat was Sissinghurst Castle, where she and Sir Harold Nicolson led an intensely private life, established around a towered ruin and cultivation of a magnificant garden. The influence of Bloomsbury continues, Garsington now belongs to history, and Sissinghurst is remembered as a family affair. The overlappings of these three English "seats" have little to do with Bloomsbury's fundamental history.

Only when we take this historical view can we begin to understand the five books recently published: the first installment of Virginia Woolf's letters, the biography and memoirs of Lady Ottoline, and two books that attempt to define Bloomsbury. The least important is David Gadd's *The Loving Friends*, a well-meaning attempt by an amateur, a former director of army education in England, who has made Bloomsbury gossip his hobby. He has written a short prosaic history of distinctively unprosaic lives. He gives a full-blown chapter to Dora Carrington, because of her Strachey connection, and one to Lady Ottoline, but shunts Virginia and Leonard Woolf into a single chapter and scants such figures as Desmond MacCarthy and Maynard Keynes. His concern is mainly with Bloomsbury's social life, and his book derives from Holroyd; history is further scrambled.

Professor Rosenbaum's compendium of writings by and about Bloomsbury is a good and useful anthology. He understands the Bloomsbury ethos. "In art and literature, in aesthetics and epistemology and ethics, in economics and politics, in love and friendship, in celebrations and denigrations, the Bloomsbury Group displays a unique complex resemblance that cannot be reduced to a platform or a creed, nor argued away because of its intricacy." This is well said and true. Rosenbaum's mistake, however, is to include certain Bloomsbury friends who never wrote a

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line or painted a picture, and whose testimony and claim to the attention of posterity derive solely from their having crossed the paths of the great. Sydney Saxon-Turner is our best example. He was a rather dull, uninteresting, compulsive civil servant liked by Leonard Woolf, a "regular" in Gordon Square but not a true contributor to any of the qualities listed by Rosenbaum as belonging to Bloomsbury. The anthologist has assembled Bloomsbury writings on Bloomsbury, certain articles about the group, and some of the controversies. His volume is more scrapbook than anthology, although the fragments are provided with his informed comment. The absence of an index in this kind of book is to be deplored.

The most important volume of those recently published is the first collection of Virginia Woolf's letters. She was originally Virginia Stephen, daughter of the great Victorian Sir Leslie Stephen, and her letters take us from her childhood in the 1880s to her marriage to Leonard Woolf in 1912. The letters are being edited by Nigel Nicolson, editor of his father's diaries and a former member of Parliament and publisher. He is being assisted by Joanne Trautmann, known for a thesis on Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West. One wonders why Sissinghurst should be, so to speak, editing Bloomsbury. While the letters are arranged and introduced with scholarly care, and the necessary backgrounds are given us, I cannot help feeling that the edition (there are to be six volumes) is being edited by two skillful technicians who are not altogether in tune temperamentally with Virginia Woolf's prose pointillism or her extraordinary literary gifts. But it is being done with competence as well as speed.

The volume reinforces a conviction I have long had that in the coming decades Virginia Woolf will emerge as a George Eliot of our time, but a finer artist and perhaps a towering figure in the imaginative writing of England's twentieth century. The best letters in the book are written to two older friends; these show us what a "professional" Virginia was from the start, and how intelligently she made her way in the book review columns of Edwardian and Georgian Britain. Her relations with her father, her brothers and sisters, and her half-brothers in the joint household created by a widower and the widow he married, the erotic overtones, the *jeunes filles en fleur* in that grim, stark house at 22 Hyde Park Gate—all are made vivid for us in this gathering-in of a correspondence that should grow in interest as we reach the full tide of Virginia Woolf's career. It is to be hoped also that we will soon be given her brilliant diaries, from which Leonard Woolf published excerpts long ago.

Virginia Stephen's letters make clear for us the beginnings of Bloomsbury, when she and her sister Vanessa set up house after their father's death, moving from Mayfair to a less fashionable part of London. In Gordon Square they created a new home, to which their brother Thoby brought his Cambridge friends. The parties and loves of these liberated young ladies, the passions as well as the "paradox and pederasty" (Lytton's phrase) of some of their friends, the sense of an encompassing world of literature and art, of novelty and discovery come to us as if we were reading fragments of Chekhov or Turgenev. It includes the courtship of Vanessa by the bourgeois Clive Bell, son of a hunting-shooting family who turned his hunter's eye on modern art; and Clive's ambiguous flirtation with the unconventional and (as it turned out) mentally disturbed Virginia. But it is Virginia's great gifts that shine from these letters: she mocks, she has the gift of summary, she is a genius of subtle simile, sketching her swift impressions with the fine irony that created her novels. "Ottoline is slowly growing rather fond of me. It is like sitting beneath an Arum lily, with a thick gold bar in the middle, dropping pollen, or whatever that is which seduces the male bee."

This particular friendship never reached any serious heights. Ottoline continued dropping pollen—powerful, sympathetic, and sentimental—in the continuous party she conducted at Garsington. Her biography by Sandra Jobson Darroch coincides with the publication of Ottoline's memoirs edited by Robert Gathorne-Hardy, who edited her diaries a decade ago. The memoirs reveal a sentient and observing woman who sees through the vampires and understands the genuine characters clustered around her. She had a kind of voyeuristic curiosity about private lives, and an ability to draw her guests

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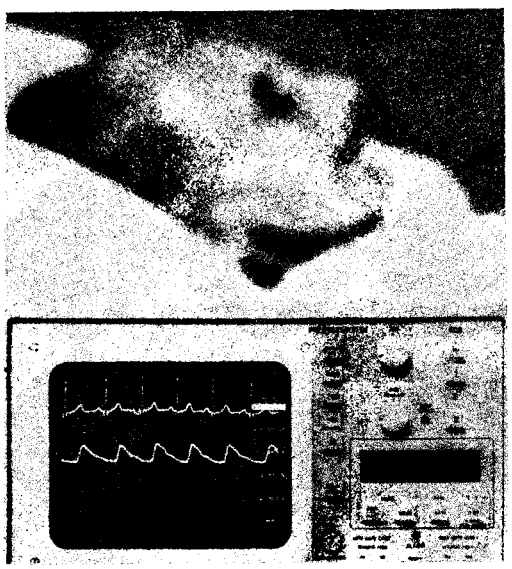

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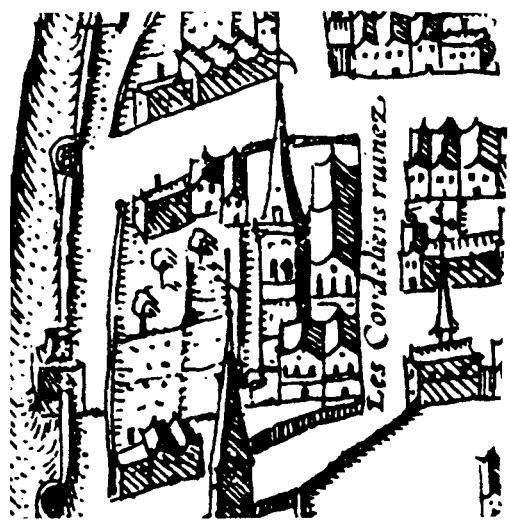

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out. Garsington was a continual series of tête-à-têtes. Her aristocratic childhood had shut many doors; she spent a lifetime trying to push them open. Miss Darroch's life is well documented and told with an order and sobriety that scarcely suggests the "baroque flamingo" of Quentin Bell's characterization. Here at last we have the love affair with Russell told from Lady Ottoline's side rather than Russell's egotistical version. One by one the great guests are given us—Aldous Huxley and his ungrateful use of Lady Ottoline in his novels; D. H. Lawrence and his disagreeable Frieda, and Lawrence's betrayal of the great lady by putting her into *Women in Love*. Old passions, old quarrels, old hurts are carefully investigated and set in perspective. Garsington and Lady Ottoline are less difficult to define than is Bloomsbury. She belongs to chronicle, gossip, legend, but Bloomsbury is a complex story of complicated creative lives. Garsington, a remarkable garden of artists, also contains many weeds. Ottoline remains by herself as we see her in the perhaps cruel, but also just, portrait by one of her great stars, Augustus John—the jutting chin, the flashing eyes, the generous Medusa.

A Foxy Hedgehog

VICO AND HERDER. Two Studies in the History of Ideas. *By Isaiah Berlin. Viking. $12.50.*

Reviewed by GEORGE KATEB

In his abundant writing on the moral and political philosophy of others, Isaiah Berlin has built at least the foundation of his own philosophy. He is a faithful commentator, faithful yet vivid. But so great are his powers of expression that his re-creation of the outlook of a great thinker is the creation of something partly new, partly his own. It is not only that he impersonates, that he interprets, that he engages in all those mental operations by which a commentator imposes himself on the living body of a dead author's work: the imposition of clarity, consistency, intention, and relevance, the drawing out of hidden, inchoate, or related meaning. He is also quite capable of improving on the thought of even the highest genius (Machiavelli, or Montesquieu, or Marx, or Tolstoy), if that can be believed. Berlin only infrequently philosophizes on his own; he characteristically depends on texts. Once impelled, however, he becomes original. In the same sentences that explain the ideas of another, he advances the purposes of that other—purposes that are Berlin's too. Just because Berlin writes mostly on those whose purposes he shares, his commentaries are his philosophy. His latest book is in ardent pursuit of his lifelong purposes. While producing an enormous excitement about two thinkers, Vico and Herder, who are not much read these days, Berlin simultaneously contrives his own statement.

What, then, are his purposes? What have they been, after his early book on Marx? To strengthen the sense that, in order to understand man's life in society, past and present, we must greatly enlarge our imagination and greatly reduce our passion to censure. At the same time, we must see the radical disjunction between humanity and the rest of nature, and thus abandon the wish to imitate science when seeking human understanding.

Berlin affirms the uniqueness of humanity. He also celebrates the pluralism of humanity—the special qualities, if not the entire uniqueness, of each culture, nation, age, tradition, style, or tendency. He denies the existence of a fixed, historically unshaped human nature, and says that man is always, but changingly, self-made. He consequently denies that there can be a science of invariant regularities encompassing human behavior, as there could be for natural substances and for animals. It might be said that Berlin tends to write on those who preserve human dignity, who in their richness support him and, in their conceptual difficulty, in their only partial accessibility, permit him to help them.

His chosen and sometimes beloved adversaries are the men of the Enlightenment and their heirs. In them Berlin finds the complex but unacceptable negative. He imputes to them a refusal or an inability to imagine their way into any culture too foreign; and, correspondingly, a condemnation of all cultures that resist enlightenment or a condescension

GEORGE KATEB is professor of political science at Amherst College. He is the author of *Political Theory* and *Utopia and Its Enemies*.

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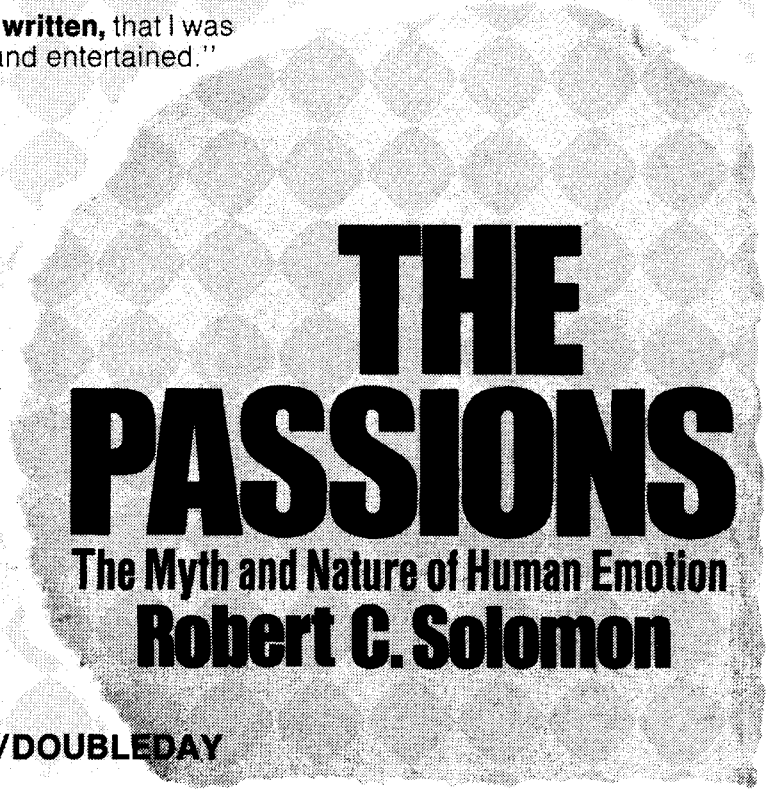

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toward all cultures not yet enlightened. Present in their thought—perhaps of a piece with this severe moralizing—is the belief that man, like substances and creatures, has a fixed basic nature and that students of man's life in society can and should aspire to the Newtonian model of natural science. In Berlin's eyes, Vico and Herder (as well as other thinkers he has studied) are great because of their inspired resistance to these connected doctrines. Berlin's attention is focused on those elements in Vico and Herder that advance his own purposes; but, to say it again, his main purposes are also theirs.

Now I do not mean to suggest that Berlin keeps making the same points over and over by finding the same points in those about whom he successively writes. He is in truth a faithful commentator. He guides us through the inevitable intricacies of a man's thought, pointing out the shifts, stratagems, confusions, and surplus riches. To read him on Vico and Herder is to watch a scholar patiently trying to master two writers of original genius but not themselves in complete mastery of their discoveries. Berlin displays the changes in Vico's thinking as well as the numerous unresolved perplexities present in it from beginning to end. His chapter on Herder, the last third of the book, attends to some disquieting implications of the thought of one he profoundly admires. When discussing his two subjects, and therefore himself, Berlin remains passionately instructive. His readers can trust him—perhaps trust him most of all—when he writes on those he likes best.

The thinkers who hold Berlin's prolonged attention in this book are two men of the eighteenth century (Herder was born in the year of Vico's death, 1744). They were alive in the Enlightenment, living (resentfully) outside the geographical center of the Enlightenment, living not in France but in Naples and Germany. They were stimulated to their great productivity by rage at the rationalist pride they thought was the dominant source of the philosophy of the Enlightenment (and of its forerunners, Descartes and the jurists, in the seventeenth century). Berlin continually highlights this antagonism and shows how it manifests itself along the whole range of moral and political philosophy.

Out of so many topics I have space for only one, the commitment of both Vico and Herder to the defense of cultural pluralism. I must say that, apart from the salience of this issue for Berlin and his two thinkers, I want to take it up because of my inability to decide finally whether the doctrine of cultural pluralism is humane. It certainly seems to be: how could pluralism not be humane? Vico and Herder, especially Herder, thought they were saving the honor of countless peoples from the scorn and dismissal of the Enlightenment philosophers. Berlin himself speaks as if the doctrine were an indispensable instrument of psychological, and hence of historical and philosophical, generosity. I cannot be sure that it is—or at least that it purely is. Even if one grants that Enlightenment philosophers suffered from some kind of rationalist pride, some deep insensitivity to the miraculously varied history of human adaptation, they may still be humane, more humane than the pluralists. I think they are more humane, but cannot be sure.

What is at stake here is the final moral result of the claims made by Vico and Herder as Berlin expounds and endorses them. Vico set himself the task of making human history coherent. He thought that the wrong way to make it coherent was to assume that in the midst of mutable circumstances human nature remains constant in its aims—specifically, in the aim of satisfying cold or savage self-interest to the fullest possible degree. Vico enlarged the repertory of basic human drives, many of them nonrational or irrational, and made their play indefinitely ingenious. He tried to retell the story of human emergence from its dark, gigantic beginnings through the heroic age, then to democracy and decadence, and at last to monarchy or a new barbarism. Clearly, Vico believed that there was a necessary pattern—the model is the history of Rome—and that the pattern would recur. But he did not believe, or did not consistently believe, that any part of the pattern is waste, or loss, or intrinsically inferior to any other part. His counsel was: try always to imagine your way into an alien, remote, or distasteful culture and perceive in it some latent aspect of yourself, some irreducibly human contribution to the course of life. Vico's pluralism consists in extending dignity to all that others want to reject as barbarous, superstitious, unclean, or cruel;

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he doesn't want to disown any part of the human family.

Herder (a really great writer) also practiced a similar kind of historical sympathy. He is closer to us than Vico, beautifully receptive to every gesture any culture has ever made, anthropological in his tolerance. In the course of his work on the history of the world's cultures, he enunciated an extreme form of pluralism. As Berlin puts it: "the belief not merely in multiplicity, but in the incommensurability, of the values of different cultures and societies and, in addition, in the incompatibility of equally valid ideals, together with the implied revolutionary corollary that the classical notions of an ideal man and of an ideal society are intrinsically incoherent and meaningless." This same belief has informed much of Berlin's writing.

How could these versions of cultural pluralism not be humane, or almost entirely humane? A cheap point to make is that both Vico and Herder seemed generous to every culture except the one ascendant in their time, that of France. It is as if all their praise of everything but France was only a way of hating France. Let that point go. The real point is that the doctrine may work with a strongly reactionary or even plainly immoral effect. It is no accident (to use a discredited phrase) that Vico fatalistically linked democracy and decadence; he seemed to revere every part of the necessary pattern except democracy. Herder railed against equality, hated cities, defended censorship, and thought that too much philosophy rotted basic social ties. Thus, the nearer they got to the very modernity of the modern age, the less generous or tolerant or anthropological both became.

The rescue of the past may, then, be purchased at the expense of the spirit of reform in the present. Strip Vico and Herder of their hostility to France and to modernity and take them solely as the first architects of an imaginative comprehension of human diversity. There would still be a reactionary potentiality. To see human adaptation everywhere, to see all cultures as equal in the sight of God, to see all aspects of any culture as composing one intelligible system of human self-expression, to see beauty everywhere, to conceive of the human race as engaged in one long process of self-creation, to love the whole human record, is to run the risk of understanding nothing and forgiving everything. If the horrors of human suffering are too easily absorbed intellectually, if the permanent fact of excess inequality is forgotten, if manipulated maladaptation is not seen, what has been understood? Without such understanding what does tolerance count for? The men of the Enlightenment were haunted by misery. They said, in effect: "Knowing what we know, and able to do what we are able to do, there are limits to our philosophical acceptance of any reality. No system has ever been good enough for our reverence, or is now good enough for our compliance." Of course, to dwell on misery may debase life without curing misery. But what shall we say when the misery is no more than noticed—the misery that some have made for others? If there are many values and admirable codes, some incompatible with others, is not misery still misery? Is there not a proper place for a universal sense of wrong, even if there can be no permanent or uniform or unproblematic or all-inclusive structure of the desirable and the worthy?

The doctrine of cultural pluralism, in these forms, turns into, or may turn into, an aesthetic substitute for morality. By enlarging historical sympathy we may narrow human sympathy. I think that historical sympathy must be accompanied by shame. (I would add in passing that Berlin has carried his version of pluralism yet further, though in contrasting ways, in two other works: an essay on Tolstoy and an essay on Machiavelli. In the former, Tolstoy's sense of the unmanageable mysteriousness of life is converted into a terrifyingly attractive invitation to passivity. In the latter, Machiavelli's theory of the active life is redefined as a sufficient *morality* utterly independent of what we commonly understand morality to be.)

The doctrine may have another cost. Berlin makes it clear that for Vico and Herder the moral unit is the group, not the individual. True, there are intimations now and then of a doctrine of individuality in Herder. In a striking sentence he says, "In each of man's powers dwells an infinity which cannot be developed in his present state. . . ." But at the heart of his thought is the idea of the soul of the group, or folk, or nation. Both writers thought that identity comes from belonging,

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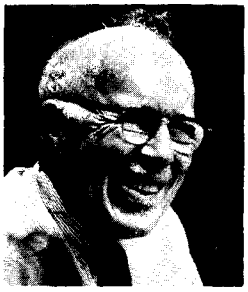

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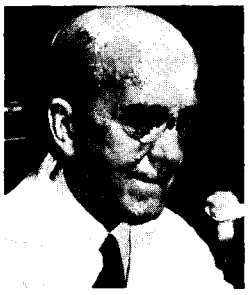

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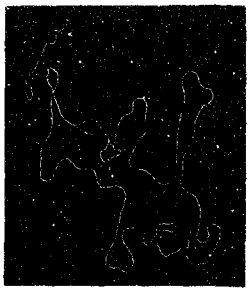

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from involuntary membership, from participation in what is more than oneself. The celebration of the diversity of cultures turns out to be quite consonant with a vision of life in which individuals blend into one mass or into a few classes or main occupations. It is not thought good or possible that at any time or place, some may, through the freedom of language and self-consciousness, know convention as convention, see through the group, see through the pseudospecies, and reach the individual, homely or superb, but precious, not as man but as a man or a woman—and then encourage others to do the same and to live by that light. Of all ideals this one, I suppose, is capable of inducing the greatest disappointment: what is more tasteless than our society's pervasive awkward egotism? Yet the tradition of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman will not die. The aspiration in it is not for cultural pluralism but for individual distinctness in a society purged of class and station and their evils. This is the romanticism that grows out of the Enlightenment rather than out of rejection of the Enlightenment. Isn't the hope carried by that tradition a more moral beauty, though perhaps a less beautiful beauty, than the reconciliation offered by cultural pluralism at its most imaginative?

Across Three Brows

THE LIFE OF RAYMOND CHANDLER. *By Frank MacShane. Dutton. $12.50.*

Reviewed by CAROLYN G. HEILBRUN

It is getting harder and harder for critics to keep their hands off the detective story. Recently several have given us their theories about the unique greatness of one mystery writer or another, always to the detriment of the genre as a whole. So, for example, Steven Marcus, in his introduction to *The Continental Op*, credits Dashiell Hammett with including "as part of the contingent and dramatic consciousness of his narrative the circumstances that the work of the detective is itself a fiction-making activity," unlike, Marcus says, "most writers of detective or crime stories before him or since." Hammett's achievement is indeed distinguished, but not for this reason. Detective fiction is written and read by so intelligent and accomplished a group of people precisely because the detective's work is, above all, that of an imaginative artist. The trouble is that critics of the detective story, in heated pursuit of a thesis or a personality, are inclined to be somewhat ruthless with a genre they don't know all that well.

One of the particular attractions of Frank MacShane's biography of Raymond Chandler is that he avoids this trap; early on, he declares that he hasn't much to say about any detective stories but Chandler's. While this omission results in one or two minor lacunae, it saves MacShane from claiming brilliance for his subject in comparison with the other poor saps in the same line of work. MacShane's chief aim and achievement alike are to create the portrait of a writer. If large claims are made for Chandler as a novelist, they are made with rare sympathy and insight that do not require MacShane to attack other writers of detective fiction.

MacShane isn't out to get Chandler either. While sensitive to the pressures on this lonely and divided man, MacShane avoids sounding like an amateur psychoanalyst. Chandler's life is particularly open to glib analysis, as a passage from a recent book about him can testify: "In 1924 his mother died, but at thirty-six Chandler was still reluctant to cut this umbilical cord. A few weeks later he married Pearl Cecily Bowen, aged fifty-three, to whom he remained faithful until (and perhaps after) her death thirty years later." Inaccuracies apart (Cissy's name is wrong, and Chandler was not faithful), the degree of oversimplification here is startling, if tempting. When one considers the traps waiting for MacShane, one must be the more impressed by his accomplishment. He has told us as much about the experience of being a writer, and particularly a writer of detective fiction, as any other recent literary biographer. He has, moreover—perhaps because he has no theories on the matter—brilliantly set forth what the English and American, classical and hard-boiled, detective fictions have in com-

CAROLYN G. HEILBRUN, professor of English at Columbia University, is this year on leave with a Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Fellowship. She has recently edited an issue of *Twentieth Century Literature* devoted to Christopher Isherwood and a book entitled *Lady Ottoline's Album.*

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mon, as opposed to where they divide.

Ironically Chandler, who might have been expected to combine the English and American detective story, did not do so: he was an American educated at an English public school, and was also a British subject. Nevertheless it was Hammett, the archetype of American macho detective novelists, who, in *The Thin Man*, wrote a comedy of manners set squarely in New York's criminal world. It was Chandler whose Philip Marlowe, together with Hammett's Sam Spade, set the pattern for the really popular form of the detective novel today: the hard-boiled, tough-guy crime novel, told in the first person, that knows all society to be corrupt and that, as John Cawelti tells us, offers in its action-oriented crime formulas a story line readily acceptable to the media of film and television.

Yet all his life Chandler dreamed of writing an English detective story. "Heigho," he wrote to his publisher, "I think I'll write an English detective story, one about Superintendent Jones and the two elderly sisters in the thatched cottage, something with Latin in it and music and period furniture and a gentleman's gentleman: above all one of those books where everybody goes for nice long walks." The tone is light, but the dream is real enough.

The figure to whom Chandler here and always compares himself is that target of all crime novelists and critics these days, Dorothy Sayers. MacShane might have been tempted to fire off a few shots at her himself if he hadn't wisely refused to become an instant authority on detective fiction. Keeping his eyes on his own subject, he amazingly manages to demonstrate the striking similarities between Chandler and Sayers, although these, of course, will be evident only to Sayers's admirers who know a good deal about her (a category that unfortunately does not include her recent biographer, Janet Hitchman).

In 1942, for example, Chandler wrote in distress to Knopf because the dust jacket of *The High Window* carried a photograph of him: "I was reading in an English book the other day and noticed the remark, 'the kind of squit who has his picture on the dustcover of his book,' or something like that. I feel a good deal like that myself." The book Chandler was "reading in" was *Strong Poison*, published by Dorothy Sayers twelve years earlier. MacShane, unaware that the quotation is from *Strong Poison*, is perhaps for that very reason able to portray Chandler as more in tune with Sayers than one could possibly have imagined.

They had in common not only an English education and a respect for the English language. Both, in their next-to-last novels, deserted the sacred rule that their detective must serve only as catalyst, and did their best to turn him into a real person. Many have sneered at how real Lord Peter Wimsey became to Dorothy Sayers; indeed, she has recorded her efforts so to transform him. Chandler, similarly, set out to transform Marlowe, and MacShane observes the astonishing degree to which Marlowe became a real person to him. Both Chandler and Sayers consciously tried to bring the detective story back into the mainstream of traditional fiction. Chandler had, indeed, recognized Sayers's attempt to do this, but had dismissed the "novel of manners" as "too slight a thing to be important." Certainly when it came to what popular audiences wanted, he was right.

What I have learned of Sayers's life suggests that she was like Chandler in many ways—a dreamer who had created a fantasy character belonging to a world where good might be made to prevail. Like many writers of detective fiction, Sayers and Chandler were lonely people, deeply moral, and never inured to the world's perfidy. Yet Sayers was able for a little longer to pretend that justice was possible, corruption at bay. Chandler, no doubt because he lived in California, knew better. Julian Symons has said that when Sayers spoke of public sympathy with the law, which she felt had made detective fiction possible, she meant the sympathy of those above a certain income level, who as a class have a stake in the existing social system. For Chandler in California there was no such class; there was only the corruption portrayed in his books, reaching all the way up to the wealthiest and most established people. Solitary among these walked Marlowe, the moral and honest man. Yet, though neither Marlowe nor Wimsey could ever have existed, Marlowe appears the more fantastic. The upper classes were allowed to run England for years, while in America an honest man in the

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public sphere is, as Chandler again and again demonstrates, an impossibility. It is no wonder that Chandler longed for England, returned there at the end of his life, and wrote with delight to his friends about English upper-class manners.

Chandler found Hammett to be more "realistic" than Sayers, but this is part of the modern tradition that identifies the real with the violent. Cawelti, for example, describes some of the plots of *The Continental Op* and concludes: "To say that such characters, actions, and settings are more realistic than the advertising agencies, country villages, or university quadrangles of Dorothy Sayers cannot withstand serious scrutiny." The crime novel, which places the criminal rather than the detective at the center of the work, may offer a more realistic perception of the world, in that we now know there is no great detective who will appear, apportion blame and innocence, and restore order. The world no longer has any belief in truth and absolution. That is, however, a long way from asserting that Sayers's backgrounds and characters are less realistic than Hammett's. Chandler, in some part of his consciousness, knew this and never stopped longing for Sayers's world. "It is," he wrote, "possible that like Beerbohm, I was born half a century too late, and that I too belong to an age of grace. I could so easily have become everything our world has no use for. So I wrote for *Black Mask*. What a wry joke." He confided to his notebook that he might "do a suave detective just for fun."

Like Sayers, Chandler valued an atmosphere of tradition, a sense of the past. "I like everything that Americans of past generations used to go and look for in Europe, but at the same time I don't want to be bound by the rules." As a result he, at fifty, created Philip Marlowe, while Sayers, by the time she was fifty, had deserted Peter Wimsey for Dante. MacShane probably did not know this when he compared Marlowe with Virgil in the *Divine Comedy*. His essential perceptions, however, were acute enough for him to establish, perhaps for the first time, Chandler's fundamental similarity, not to the other tough-guy writers, but to Sayers and the English women writers—Josephine Tey, Ngaio Marsh, Margery Allingham—who helped to create great classical detective fiction.

One is glad to know that Chandler, tormented as he was, nonetheless was rewarded by England, the country he loved, for suffering the conflicts of dreamer and tough guy, Englishman and Californian, classicist and radical, and for skillfully resolving those conflicts in his work. Toward the end of his life, when the *Daily Express* ran a public opinion poll to find out who the most popular figures were, according to highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow tastes, Chandler was delighted to announce, "Marilyn Monroe and I were the only ones who made all three brows."

It was a tribute Sayers would have scorned and could not have won. Chandler earned it the hard way, and MacShane's skillful biography, tracing the road to that tribute, endears Chandler to us as no one else has done.

Paradise Lost?

THE GENTLE TASADAY: A STONE AGE PEOPLE IN THE PHILIPPINE RAIN FOREST. *By John Nance. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $15.*

Reviewed by ARAM A. YENGOYAN

The popularization of anthropology has emerged in the mass media within the past twenty years, and the topics presented range from child care as it relates to comparative socialization, to our primate ancestry, and, of course, to what is the essence of human nature. The early writings of Margaret Mead (*Coming of Age in Samoa, Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, and so on) conveyed the idea that all human societies must work toward satisfying certain common prerequisites in maintaining themselves, but that particular cultures achieve survival through different ways of living. Thus her writings stressed cultural differences as they constitute the arc of human response, all forming the totality of human nature.

Within the past two decades, popular accounts emphasize the idea of the "primitive" as forming the connecting link with our early

ARAM A. YENGOYAN is professor of anthropology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He has written extensively about the peoples and cultures of the southern Philippines as well as about the Australian aborigines.

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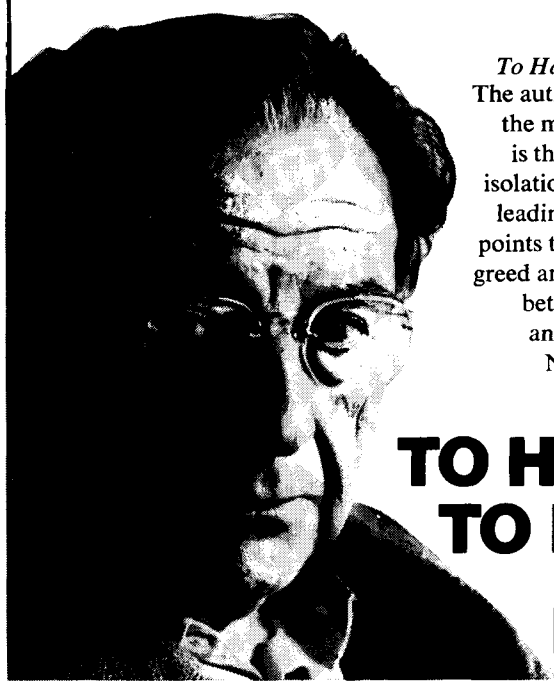

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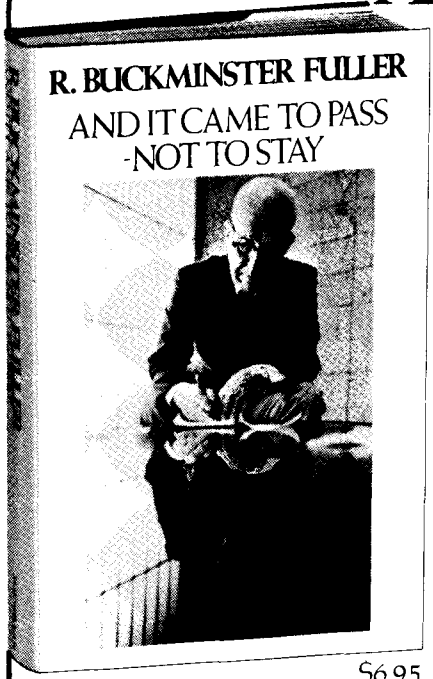

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primate ancestors, and concentrate on man's nature as it involves problems of evolution and survival. In most cases the "primitive" is conceptualized as the savage counterpart to the present; consequently this relationship should tell us what we were like fifty thousand years ago.

The popularizers, in unraveling the problem of human nature, work from the assumption that man's behavior is primarily controlled by biological and genetic processes that provide instrumental imperatives for survival. The layman's discussion of ethology (that is, the biological basis of behavior) is most evident in the works of Robert Ardrey and Desmond Morris. Both of these writers present oversimplified arguments that tend to reduce the range of human response to a single factor: humanity as it results from the biological paradigm, and thus coded and controlled by the genetic constitution. If the "primitive" is savage, fierce, and aggressive, then the key to understanding overt cultural violence rests in our genes. The popularizers of this position contend that all behavior is a result of territorial and social imperatives that are biologically transmitted and basic to all animal and human life. However, more technical and serious endeavors in ethology, such as E. O. Wilson's massive compendium, *Sociobiology*, take account of multiple factors that are present in any ethological interpretation. No single force, they claim, explains all behavior.

Pseudoscientism, however, is not limited only to the proponents of the biological paradigm. Another form of popular anthropology is concerned with the translation of other cultures into categories that are comprehensible to Western thought. Traditional forms of thought and conceptualization in Western civilization are imposed on diverse societies with the aim of demonstrating that cultural differences are only facades masking basic human similarities. Whereas anthropologists in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s stressed the cultural differences that constitute the human condition, present-day anthropological accounts stress cultural similarities. Thus, human cultural differences are reduced to a basic level of common denominators that remove the human quality from humanity. Through comparisons in search of similarities, the bizarre, erotic, and exotic customs of the "primitive" are made "rational" for understanding and hence palatable to the Western mind. In this form of cultural translation, nothing escapes the anthropologist's ability to comprehend and convey cultural differences; consequently, the uniqueness and finer aspects of a particular cultural life and thought are eroded for the sake of analytic neatness.

In contrast to popular accounts, scientific writings in anthropology are highly prone to social scientism: its heavy reliance on statistical techniques, its adherence to methodological sophistication, and its ample use of social science jargon, which reeks from the pages of professional journals. The premise of this scientism is a highly impersonal inquiry, which separates the analyst from the subject matter. The insistence on a strict framework virtually denies the possibility that man as a cultural being still remains the subject of study. Scientific assumptions, theories, and methodologies have converted man, once the subject of study, to the object of study—a truly lamentable position.

To anthropological writings ranging from popularized oversimplifications to a dehumanizing social scientism, John Nance's *The Gentle Tasaday* offers a most welcome balance, one that avoids all the common pitfalls and vulgarisms of popularization and yet conveys a good ethnographic picture in which the basic humanity of a small society is comprehended and transmitted to the reader. Nance, an American correspondent in Manila who was among the first to come in contact with the Tasaday, has written about the lives of thirty to forty Tasadays who have met the outside world only during the past six or seven years.

The Tasaday, who inhabit the interior tropical forest of southern Cotabato, Mindanao, are a hunting and gathering people, subsisting on roots, fruits, grasses, and palms. Their material life can best be described as rudimentary. Lacking metal, salt, tobacco, pottery, and clothing, among other things, the Tasaday survive through the use of digging sticks, traps, and the ability to inhabit limestone caves covered with foliage and forest canopies. The Tasaday say they know nothing of fear, war, hate, murder, and evil. They live a life of minimal material needs, yet a serenity of emotion and human exchange is

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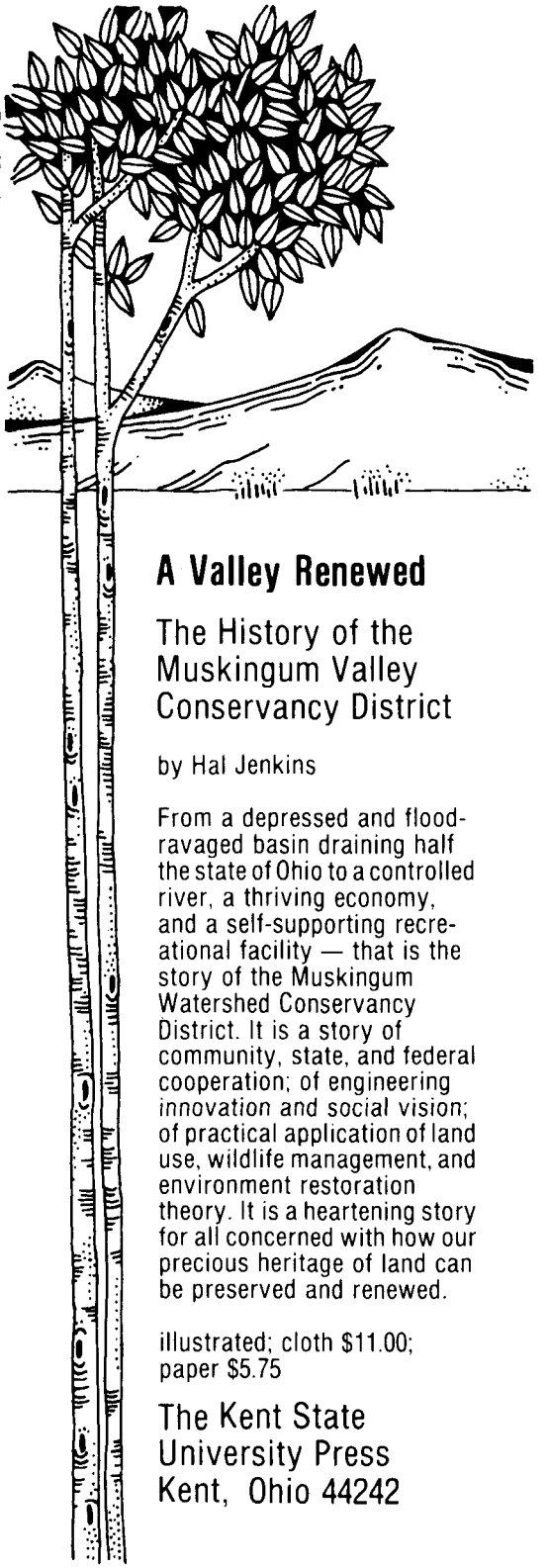
provided by a system in which force and violence are totally absent. What nature has denied man in material possessions and pleasures, the humanity of the Tasaday has evolved through a system of belief and thought in which moral imperatives provide a conviction of life that is basic and paramount to all individuals. Tasaday life, however, is not all paradise. Many marriageable individuals simply cannot acquire eligible spouses; thus the problem of maintaining numbers of people from generation to generation has always existed. Also, since the available amounts of daily food vary to extremes, sustenance has always been a potentially critical problem.

Although this volume is not written as a scientific account, one may read it as a documentary that yields information on Tasaday social life and how the Tasaday world view has been conceived. This information is most important to any student of human cultures, not only in showing how a very small society works and cooperates, but also because Nance's account may well be the last word on the Tasaday. Owing to certain edicts from the Philippine government, the Tasaday have now been sealed off from scientists, land grabbers, poachers, loggers, and tourists.

In conveying the basic features of Tasaday life, Nance also notes and analyzes encounters between a select number of representatives of Western culture (anthropologists, photographers, administrators, and others) and a native people who are entering the twilight of history. These personal and cultural transactions tell us something about ourselves and the kinds of logic that Western thought imposes on different cultural milieus. Thus Nance and others realized that the idea of a pervasive dominant acquisitiveness and the desire to change was not the mode of operation in Tasaday life. When gifts were presented to individual Tasadays, they distributed and redistributed these among themselves, and eventually a certain level of commonality was restored. Whereas in Western culture a person seeks to gain, through work and success, an individuality within the social setting, the Tasaday impose a strict moral code on all individuals that binds them into a oneness.

Throughout *The Gentle Tasaday*, a deep personal understanding emerges from the ac-



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tions and reactions between the Tasaday, the members of the expedition, and Nance himself. Because all the groups read different meanings into their various exchanges, tensions and misunderstandings develop while the Tasaday provide a passive background for the human drama. The motivations and ambitions of all individuals and groups are set forth with clarity and insight. (One wonders how the Tasaday survived the onslaught of the AP, UPI, NBC, CBS, BBC, and Charles Lindbergh.)

Nance's basic point about the Tasaday is really a comment on what has happened to civilization in general. The Tasaday are not simply another weird or bizarre society, but an extremely disturbing reminder of what may have been a *temps perdu*, a time past, which, like that of Proust, is forever lost and only capable of reconstruction through our best sifting of remains, themselves soon to be "contaminated." This sentiment, which runs throughout the volume, is brought to full and final realization when Nance notes: "The Tasaday, even as they took the first and rudimentary steps toward possible contamination, stood in the depths of their forest as an extraordinary example for their more sophisticated fellow man. Although we could not or would not emulate them and may never extract new principles of behavior from them, we could treasure them as reminders of what was humanly possible; as inspiring emblems of social peace and harmony, of, simply, love."

Far from being yet another commonplace popularization of anthropology, *The Gentle Tasaday* is a sensitive account of behavior, belief, and values long lost in Western civilization. In many ways, one could approach the Tasaday story as an ethnographic novel or a form of poetics in which an essential humanism is part of man's cultural existence. The humanistic tradition in anthropology is old, but it is reemerging through the works of Clifford Geertz, Laurence Wylie, and others. Novelists, however, have long perceived their task as that of revealing man and his thoughts without violating the very substance that makes man human. The works of Nikos Kazantzakis on the Greeks, Oliver LaFarge on the Navaho, and Theodora Kroeber on Ishi testify that the human quality of life in different cultures can be interpreted to Western audiences without severe distortion or crass simplification of cultural complexity. In this tradition, *The Gentle Tasaday* is a critical statement of what humanity has lost in the midst of cultural growth and social uniformity. To those of us who believe that Homo sapiens is unique, this volume is important for an understanding of the human condition.

End of the Line

DESTINATION AMERICA. *By Maldwyn A. Jones. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $12.95.*

Reviewed by JOHN HIGHAM

It is a singular fact that a quarter of a century has passed since any American scholar has given us a general history of immigration, at least of any substance, in spite of an enormous growth of interest in the subject during that time. Since Oscar Handlin's *The Uprooted* (1951), the immigrant experience has moved into the center of national consciousness, civic groups and government bureaucrats have scattered "ethnic heritage" programs across the land, and a new generation of scholars has put at the top of their agenda the history of the tired, the poor, and the wretched refuse. Yet the general syntheses of American immigration published since Handlin's prose-poem have come from British authors. We also owe to a British economic historian the most broadly conceived special study of recent years, Brinley Thomas's *Migration and Economic Growth* (1954). Immigration, it might seem, has swamped the American mind.

Actually, the importation of immigration histories is more of a tribute to British scholarship than an embarrassment to American. For the small but lively company of American specialists in Britain, the subject has an exceptional appeal. Nothing else has differentiated British from American society so clearly as the flux and diversity generated here by immigration. Britain too has powerful ethnic minorities—Scots, Welsh, Irish—and in the last few years it has discovered an immigra-

JOHN HIGHAM is a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. His most recent book is *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America.*

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tion problem as well. But the old British minorities are rooted possessively in their own regions as none of the American peoples (including the frequently displaced Indians) can be; and the new nonwhite minorities from overseas bring to the British student of American history a shock of recognition. The significance of immigration in producing the remarkable mobility of American society stands out sharply from a transatlantic perspective; yet the contrast can be seen in familiar categories as a reshaping of a common heritage.

British historians have seized the story of American immigration not only with a fascination for the social contrasts it illuminates, but also with a point of view embracing more of the immigrant experience than American scholars have ordinarily cared to investigate. Americans tend to study a specific ethnic group or a particular American locale. They write about social mobility in Boston, or about Norwegians in the upper Middle West, or about ethnic voting in certain elections. A leading British scholar, Frank Thistlethwaite, pointed out years ago that American writers took the migrant's departure for granted and concentrated on his destination, that American immigration history was excessively American-centered. The charge, though somewhat less true today, remains pertinent. When viewed from London or Stockholm or Rome, on the other hand, the great migrations to America belong to international history. Their origins then appear as intriguing as their outcome. Their effects can be sought in the transformation not just of America but of the entire Atlantic world. Accordingly, European scholars in recent decades have contributed notably to knowledge of the sources of emigration. And the British, located closer than others to the American end of the story, have given us the most adequate syntheses of its entirety.

Maldwyn Jones, professor of American history at the University of London, is a Welshman. He is a plain man with an instinctive sympathy for the trials of simple people and a respect for their courage and endurance. Already the author of an earlier survey of American immigration, he has now produced an entirely fresh treatment of the transatlantic migrations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It makes no claim to new discoveries; it advances no startling

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SOCIETY AND HISTORY
Essays by Sylvia L. Thrupp

Professor Thrupp analyzes the rigors and the values of life in medieval cities and towns, with affectionate skepticism. Medieval business practice, the role of guilds, city life, attitudes toward foreigners, general discussions of historical method, of sociology, or anthropology, and of political science sparkle with a good-humored deflation of pomposity and a sturdy faith in the scholar's calling.

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theses. Rather, Jones has woven the results of recent scholarship into a sturdy narrative, enlivened with details from his own extensive researches. Judicious and humane, concise but never cryptic, this is a book for all public libraries and every sort of reader.

It is a book of pictures as well as text. Jones served as historical consultant to a British television series of the same name, and he wrote the book to accompany the series. At his disposal, therefore, was a cornucopia of photographs and drawings garnered from private collections and public archives on both sides of the ocean. These fascinating vignettes of human experience do more than "illustrate" the text. Without overwhelming it, they amplify and deepen it in a hundred directions.

I suspect that the pictures have imposed certain limitations. Authentic visual material on immigration prior to the nineteenth century hardly exists. That is probably why Jones's narrative begins in 1815, although he insists that the immigrant experience was "basically the same" from the seventeenth century on. Also, pictures of people in transit—farewells, inspections, shipwrecks, wagon trains—and in the process of taking up a new life are more readily available and more dramatically intelligible than views of their antecedent conditions. That may explain the brevity with which Jones treats the European background, although he accords it a full and proper significance. Within these broad limits Jones has produced a genuine book—not a "picture book"—in which pictures and text harmoniously collaborate.

The theme, as befits our bicentennial mood, is one of ambivalence. The American nation succeeded extravagantly through the labor and loyalty of its immigrants; yet ethnic diversity has also strained the social fabric and deprived America of "those instinctive sympathies which create a sense of community among people who share a common culture." For the immigrants too, gains and losses have checkered the record. To a great extent people emigrated to preserve under more favorable circumstances a way of life that was crumbling. If they prospered in America, however, it was often at the sacrifice of what they had hoped to save. Jones quotes a Swedish pastor who had labored seventeen years in Chicago and then retreated to his

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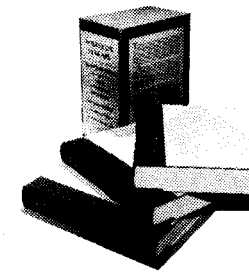
homeland: "Among my numerous missteps in life, there are two for which I may properly blame myself: one, that I ever emigrated to America; [two,] that after I had made my home and found my field of service there, I returned from that country." America was not the only option for displaced people, and a historian who ponders alternatives cannot reach a simple judgment.

So, in important ways, *Destination America* benefits from its genesis in London. Yet the subject of American immigration invites a still wider perspective, which none of our British interpreters have been disposed to take. If one could have watched the migration of people to America from a spaceship revolving about the earth, one would have observed processes far more complicated than the movement across the North Atlantic that Jones concentrates upon. At first the spaceship would have picked up two streams, one from northwestern Europe and the other from Africa. Only after the African movement was cut off did the current from Europe swell to prodigious proportions. As the European migration reached high tide, our astronaut would have noticed trickles beginning from other directions: one southward from Canada, another eastward from China. He would then have observed the European flood meeting the Chinese stream in California, and turning it back.

But not permanently. In the twentieth century another migration from Asia would appear, as would a northward flow from the West Indies and Mexico. By the 1910s the spaceship would discover migrations to the United States from all points of the compass. Eventually, in the 1970s, the Asian and the Latin American migrations would exceed the European. And all these currents would become fully intelligible only if our aerial observer perceived their dynamic interrelations with vast migrations to other growth areas within an expanding international system.

Just as American scholars of immigration have traditionally been too America-centered, European scholars are understandably Eurocentric. Immigration history calls for a global point of view, in which the symbol of the Statue of Liberty facing toward Europe—so appropriately dominating the jacket of this book—will have to shrink to its true provincial scale.



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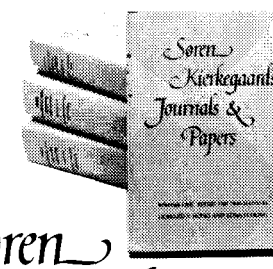

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The Reader Replies

THE READER REPLIES *carries miscellaneous comments by readers and authors on various articles that have appeared in the magazine. All communications should be addressed to: Editor,* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, *1811 Q Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20009. Because of space limitations we cannot guarantee to print all letters received.*

—EDITOR

Morris Cohen—Fifty Years Later

I hope that other readers may join me in protesting Sidney Hook's unqualified assertions, in his article on Morris Cohen (Summer 1976), that George Santayana was "an ill-concealed anti-Semite" and that his "political heroes" were Mussolini, Franco, and Stalin.

To speak of the latter accusation first, students of Santayana will smile at the thought of their skeptical philosopher acknowledging any heroes, especially political ones. He was certainly no Democrat in politics, but neither was he doctrinaire in any other political direction, seeing legitimacy in various forms of government for various historical periods. Having lived in Italy throughout most of the Mussolini regime, he said in 1950 that it was preferable to "the disorderly socialism that preceded the impotent party chaos that has followed it," admittedly a debatable conclusion, although Italian party chaos is certainly still with us. But in the same letter in which he made the preceding statement he added: "Mussolini personally was a bad man and Italy a half-baked political unit; and the *militant* foreign policy adopted by Fascism was ruinous in its artificiality and folly" (letter to Corliss Lamont, *The Letters of George Santayana*, 1955, page 405). As to Franco and Stalin, perhaps Mr. Hook has some special knowledge of Santayana's opinion but I cannot recall ever having seen in the now considerable Santayana canon any favorable mention of these two. Considering that they were at opposite ideological poles, it would seem strange if both were his political heroes, unless one assumes that he liked dictators per se.

Was Santayana an anti-Semite, as Hook charges? Certainly he often took issue with aspects of the Hebraic tradition, but this hardly made him an anti-Semite. I think it is absurd to suggest that had Santayana met Morris Cohen he would have "detested" him because of his Jewishness. Far from being hostile to Jews, Santayana was on friendly terms with several, and he had many admiring Jewish students. The truth of the matter is well stated by Horace M. Kallen, who was Santayana's friend and student:

> Santayana's condemnation of what he called the Hebraic tradition was part and parcel of the intellectual rejection of a world of flux and change and drama and salvation, in favor of the well-ordered Hellenic world. It had nothing to do with living Jews as such. As it happened, you know, most of the students who were meaningful to him and to whom he was meaningful, were Jews (*Dialogue on George Santayana*, 1959, pp. 38–39).

I don't think Santayana deserves Professor Hook's glib tags.

MORTIMER SMITH
Washington, D.C.

MR. HOOK replies: The passage to which Mr. Smith refers reads: "Had Santayana met Cohen in his mature years, he would have detested him, not only because Santayana was an ill-concealed anti-Semite but because of Cohen's unqualified liberalism in the age of Mussolini, Franco, and Stalin, all of whom were Santayana's political heroes."

I acknowledge on rereading my essay that the passing references to Santayana should have been more qualified. Nonetheless I am convinced that they are substantially justified. Santayana himself admits in one of his autobiographical remarks that he "detested disputation of any kind," and Cohen was notoriously disputatious.

My reference to Santayana's anti-Semitism reflected my memory of his rejoinder to Irwin Edman's and Milton Munitz's mildly critical comments in the volume devoted to Santayana in the

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Library of Living Philosophy. Santayana refers to their criticism (p. 538) as an expression of "a fresh wave of zeal in political and radical [*sic!*] matters." Their Jewishness—for that is what "race" means in this context—had absolutely nothing to do with their criticisms. The phrase was intended to be denigrating and was purely gratuitous. John Dewey was also shocked by Santayana's tone and language. In his review of the volume in *Mind* (1940, p. 379), he pointedly criticizes Santayana's reference to them as uncalled for, all the more so because the problems they raised flowed from their attempt to understand Santayana's position. Santayana was particularly savage to Munitz, whose criticism he cites as evidence that Munitz was miscast for his proper vocation, which should have been one of prosecuting attorney—this despite the laudatory treatment Munitz had given his work some years earlier.

The use of the term "heroes" was too strong, but when I wrote my essay I relied on the memory of some letters Santayana had written me that were not then accessible. In one of them from Rome, dated June 8, 1934, Santayana writes: "I utterly repudiate liberal claims and maxims which make events turn on ideas, opinions, votes, majorities and disembodied moral power . . . I love order, in the sense of organized, harmonious, consecrated living, and for this reason I sympathize with the Soviets, and the Fascists, and the Catholics, but not at all with the liberals. I should sympathize with the Nazis, too, if their system were, even in theory, founded on reality; but it is Nietzschean, founded on will, and therefore a sort of romanticism gone mad. . . ."

My considered judgment of Santayana's later political views, which are decidedly not those of his great work *The Life of Reason*, will be found in my review of his *Dominations and Powers*, 1951, in the *New York Sunday Times Book Review*, the year the book appeared.

Looking for America

Aristides' essay in the Summer 1976 issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR gave me so much satisfaction that I reread it. De Toqueville fit in nicely, didn't he?

But . . . and here is the burden of my disagreement. I found nothing in his rediscovery of America about us farmers and the rural areas of the country. No one west of the Hudson and Potomac seems to know that farmers exist, as if all food came from the supermarket. The kids think so; milk comes from a carton—what's a cow? Every year we fed out 300 to 400 Wyoming and/or Texas calves for the Chicago and New York night club and hotel trade. We hauled, ground the feed, spread the manure, raised the corn and alfalfa. My dear Aristides, this is how you can eat. The earth is the foundation, the means of our livelihood. You folks, I know, feel that skyscrapers and apartment buildings and supermarkets, surrounded by asphalt and cement, make the world. But it just "ain't so."

Aristides said people didn't know what they thought. Farmers know, I assure you. They can tell you damn quick what they think. They are the real creative people—"Agriculture is the mother of the arts" (Greek)—they put seed, earth, weather, skill, and knowledge together and bring to life something new. Yet they receive from the eastern literary crowd a patronizing stare and a note of snobbery.

I can testify. Probably I am the only true farmer-poet whose poems, as Robert Frost told me, have calluses on them. This does not make them good poems. But my work has been in *Poetry* (Chicago) under all its editors up to Daryl Hine. This speaks well for them. But to be in an eastern magazine I must go to a literary magazine like the *Virginia Quarterly* or some highly sophisticated periodical like *Harper's Bazaar* which uses farm poems for (I suppose) shock effect.

But to get back to my original complaint. Why,

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
Dorothy B. Kerr

to eastern writers, isn't the Midwest part of America? We have more arable land here than any place in the world, we have a rich culture, we send men like Senators Harold Hughes, Dick Clark, John Culver to Congress (shining lights, believe me!), but we tend to be friendly, appreciative, tolerant, and conservative. Bernstein and the Philharmonic will be at Iowa State U. next week—I suppose they'll get sick again because of the pure air. We have our good writers and poets—no Pulitzer Prize winners; Sam Hazo says that prize is decided by the "New York Establishment."

I'm puzzled. But all the same, let's not forget that I enjoyed Aristides' essay very much.

James Hearst
Professor Emeritus
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Poetry and the American Public

After shaking a stick at "the hazards and inequities of publishing in the U.S." and its resultant literary-sociological implications for today's poet and inadequate audience, Samuel Hazo, in his article in the Spring 1976 issue, laments the situation but offers little hope for its improvement.

There is no mention of the attempt on the part of alternative presses to break the "ineluctable pattern" and he is disdainful of Women (with a capital W) and Minorities (with a capital M) who are "rushing into print" or "waiting in the wings."

What is missing, in an otherwise adequate recital of the way things are, is acknowledgment that in the making and breaking of a poet in the current marketplace, established poets (primarily white and male) help to perpetuate the system. Catering to editorial whims and current fashion, writing, dedicating, and reading to and for each other, they cling to the symbiotic relationship. This self-serving, locked-in circumstance is insincere and therefore invalid in the long run.

The stampede is indeed on. The death knell is sounding all around us for the very elitism Hazo deplores; it cannot long survive the democratic leveling off that continues in all the creative arts. Today, everybody is turning into a poet. And if the clamoring voices of the other half of humanity (with a capital W) and the new voices of many tongues (with a capital M) keep surging forward to create and measure the condition of the American soul, what, oh what, will it be like in a few years when all of Kenneth Koch's moppets come of age?

Darcy Gottlieb
Jackson Heights, New York

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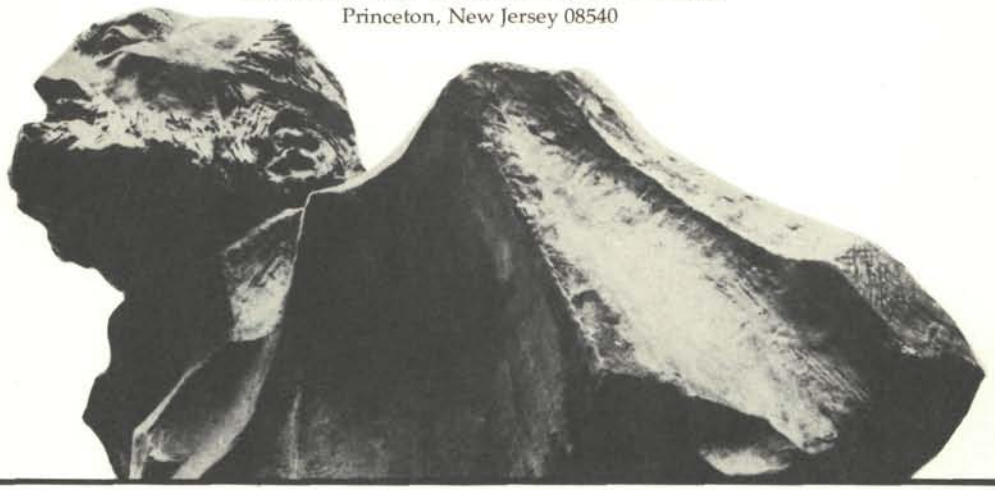

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